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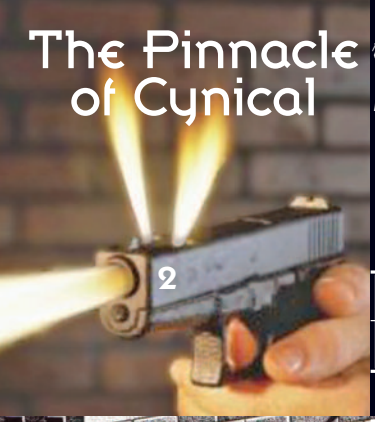


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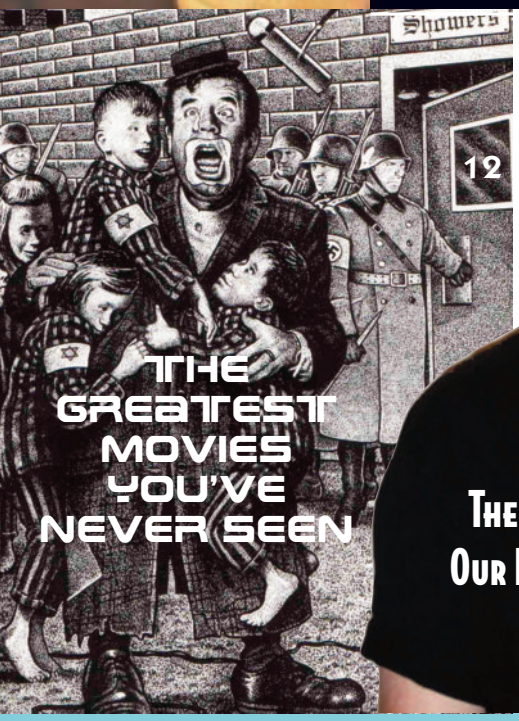


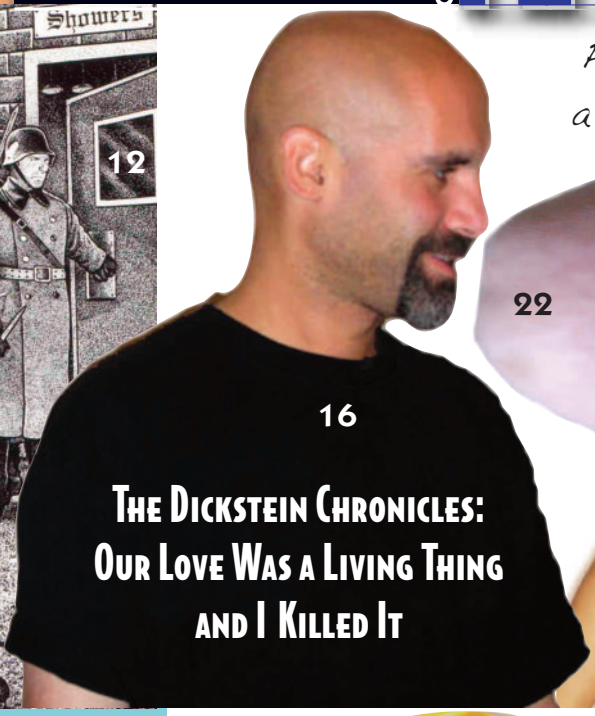

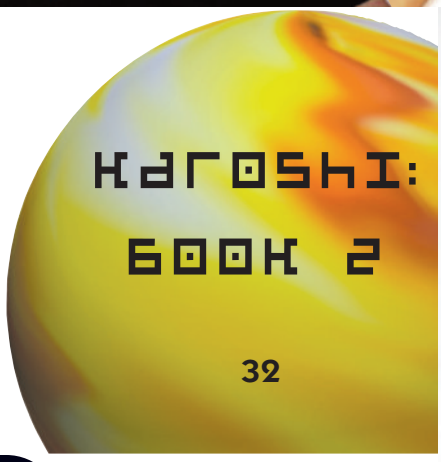

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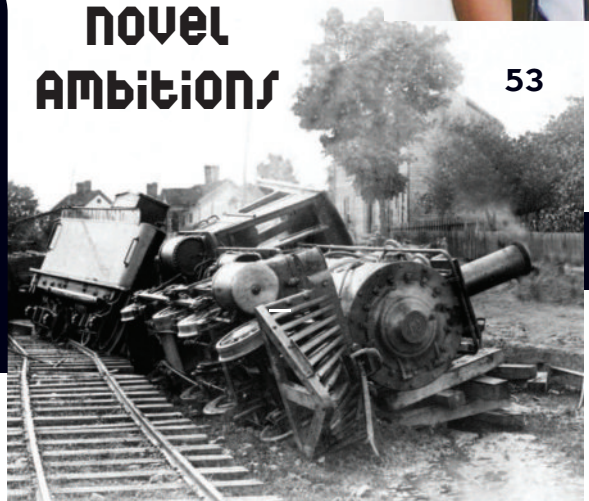

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Negative Capability, a paper zine where narcissism meets misanthropy.

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# THE PINNACLE

**It's not a zine if it doesn't start with an apology for lateness. I have a really good excuse this time, you see, I've been breeding instead of zining, but don't let that worry you. It does not mean that I've gone soft. Well, maybe it does. I feel as hard as I've ever been, but the source of my hostility is the great mass of humanity, so as long as you're still out there, I'll still be pissed off. From the very first issue, I have always planned a special installment of *Negative Capability* where the ratio of bile to blowjobs was the inverse of previous issues, but how could I possibly write that much *nice* stuff? So, two sons and many years later I am facing the unenviable task of trying to think of something nice to say. You can call it painting yourself into a corner, you can call it hubris, you can call it a barn and paint it red, I don't care. Whatever.com.**

So why do I bother making an old-school paper zine when killing trees to communicate with a thousand anti-social luddites is *so* last century? Because I like zines and just because everyone else stops doesn't mean that I will also stop. I don't read many blogs because if 90% of everything sucks, then 99.9% of blogs suck even harder. If you do a blog, bully for you. I am never going to read it, but bully for you. I do a zine because I can. And because no one can stop me. And because I promised a few subscribers more issues. And I still have something that I have to say.

Maybe you have never even seen a zine before, is that even possible? If so, please don't use this as an example because I don't want to be a role model. Zines are a dying medium and with good reason. It's far cheaper and more efficient to self-publish online, where the only real cost is your time. You can get free hosting, software, stolen images and all the rest. All it takes is half an idea and a few words, and you too can join the chattering classes online. I am far from anti-technology; I have worked in IT and this zine has always had a web site that is updated only slightly more often than new issues are published.

Sometimes I feel like crusty old Alan Moore, trying to convince disinterested strangers that the style I've chosen for my creative expression doesn't work in any other medium and therefore it should never be adapted. It's just words, pictures and type design, all of which is not only feasible to do online, but quite common.

Everyone defines the world so that the skills they are born with and interests they have are the most valued and everything else is worthless. This explains why I respect good spelling and grammar, but don't give a shit about athletic ability. I am impressed with people who know pop culture trivia, and revile morons who memorize sports statistics, even though it is essentially the same skill differently applied.

It took me six long, painful years, but I finally lost my job. I really wasn't trying very hard for most of it, so it did not come as a shock when the hammer fell. My job has always been the single greatest obstacle to a consistent publishing schedule. After the whole experience of waking up early, commuting, working all day and then getting back home, it's really hard to have energy or motivation for anything, much less an unpaid gig working for a slavedriver like me.

I finally realized why it is that I tend to get fired from jobs: I refuse to quit, no matter how annoying it gets. All jobs have to end sometime, and if I won't quit the only way out is to get fired—or for the company to be seized by the IRS and put out of business, but since I have already gone through those two exits, what's left? Maybe nothing. Maybe I'm just retired. Maybe I will never work for anyone else for the rest of my natural life. Wouldn't that be swell? Well, that's not something I can count on, but I can dream, can't I? Maybe that's where the kindness will come from, that place in me that is always so tense and exhausted from having to work. All of those bad feelings and anxieties, they are completely gone now. I still have plenty of responsibilities, but sucking another man's ass for cash—which is what all jobs are when you get right down to it—is off my agenda for a while.

I have always thought of myself as channeling the spirit of Bill Hicks and I read an interview with Bill's best friend Kevin Booth where he was asked, "If you're doing something that is honestly what you believe, that would be channelling Bill Hicks?" and Kevin said, "Yeah, definitely." So I got that going for me.

So what have I been up to? The business of life. I am always writing, but not necessarily for the zine. I write hilarious captions for my kids' pictures and long letters to dear friends. I am on Facebook daily. I spent some time on a goofy side project about Don Swayze (see "Don Swayze," which is part of "Callback" on page 8). I also can't forget the hours I have spent exploring the new Liberty City in *Grand Theft Auto IV*.

In each issue, I try to do something different with the design and this time I am trying to keep it as simple as I can. All of my previous issues were micromanaged to the point of kerning to decimals of a pica, if you know what I mean.

***Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go.***
***- Oscar Wilde***

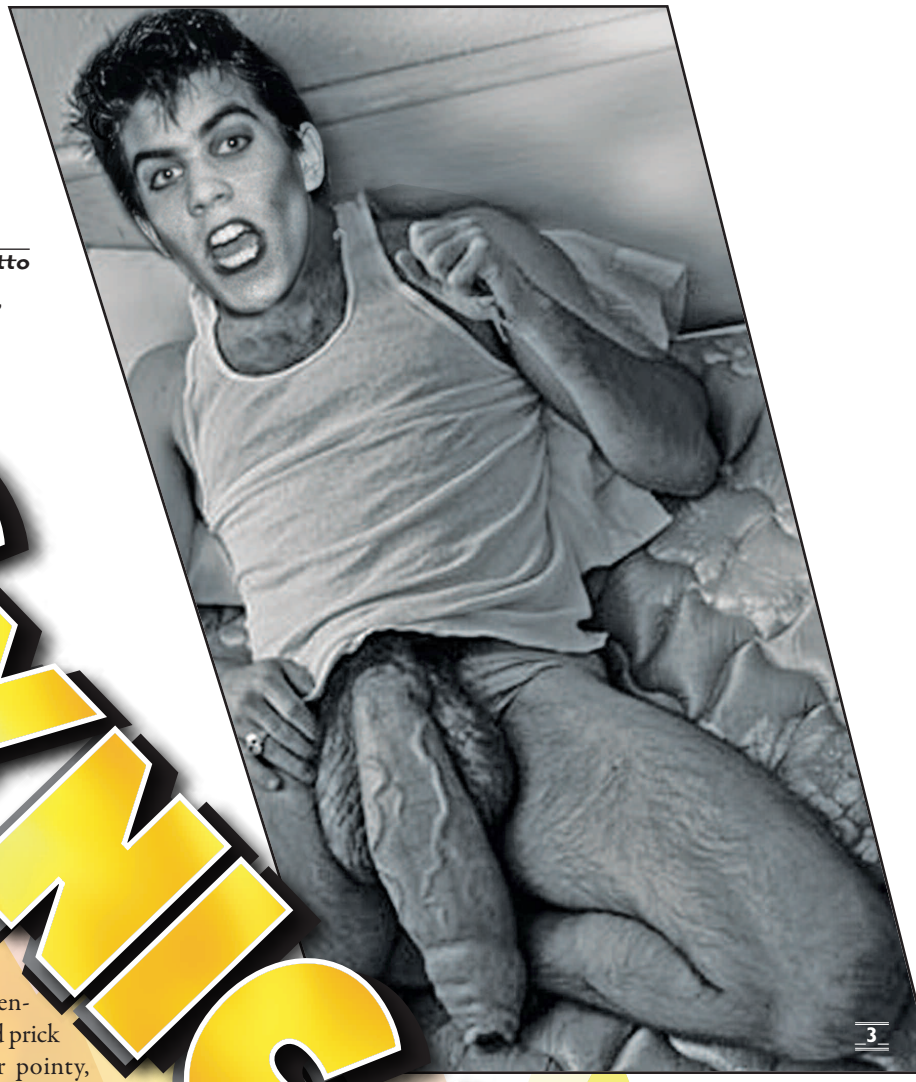


***Life is hard and so am I. You better give me something so I don't die. - eels***

*He is a self-made man and worships his creator. - John Bright*

# OF CYNICAL

*The New NegCap Motto*
*"Gentle if stroked, fierce if provoked."*



Instead of cramming every page with lots of multi-layered elements and complicated shit, I am going to presume that you read zines to read zines, not just because of the layout. After making that decision, I found myself feeling more relaxed about the design, knowing that everything didn't have to be worked on forever. I can just let it go. There's still going to be a shot of a cock somewhere—it wouldn't be *Negative Capability* without some cock—and if that turns you on, you're just a freak, like me!

There are many times when I hate myself. Times when I literally can't look at myself in the mirror because I make myself sick. Maybe I yelled something at my wife that I didn't mean but really felt, and now that sharp thing that I spit at her is sticking out of her little body, reminding me how cruel I am. I talk shit about people just to pass the time and if I ever had to watch a tape of myself, with the person I was talking about, then you might begin to understand how I feel. I often hate on complete strangers, children sometimes, for no discernable reason. The dialogue in my head is full of things like, "Fuck you, Mr. Hummer," and "Jesus, what crawled up your ass and died, Hector?" I watch the news, see tragedy and never think, "There but for the grace of God go I." Instead I smirk and think, "Better them than me." I mock the elderly, I goof on people's sincere religious beliefs, and I often joke about fucking other people's mothers when I know that my wife is the only woman for me, regardless of how hot your mom is. And I know my wife is a total MILF, believe me. I did say this was the "nice" issue of *Negative Capability*, didn't I?

In this way, I am an absolute horror of a human being. The Jøsh that is writing this is clear-headed, rational, sober, logical and quite serious. That's who I like to be most of the time. But when I am provoked, stressed or sleep-deprived, I regress to being a seventeen-year-old, snot-nosed prick who likes his hair pointy, his music loud, and his parents to shut the fuck up and stay out of his room. That little bastard thinks that the nice Jøsh is a sellout, poseur asshole masquerading as a human being. My wife often asks what the sullen, angry misanthrope Jøsh has ever done for me, and all I can say is that I think that he wrote four really good, funny, angry zines. Well, five, now. Now let's try one as I am most of the time.

There are other nuanced facets to this dichotomy, but the main battle inside my head, the epic struggle, is between the pragmatic adult and the delusionally self-righteous kid. Or as the kid would say, the *spread-eagled whore* versus the only man left in the world *who gives a damn*! They're both wrong, but the drama certainly does keep office meetings interesting.

I'll never be either one or the other completely; it's a blood feud between the kid who refuses to stop cursing and the man who just wants some fucking peace so he can get a good night's sleep. Most of the zine is written by the teen, and it's the sellout who pays for it. When you look at it this way, the nice Jøsh is always overindulging his spoiled, bratty inner child, right? In this way, I am not so different from you.

This is not what I was supposed to be. I am not supposed to be so fucked-up and damaged inside and out. I was whole once, before I knew what it meant, and when I was finally shattered, it was like I had always known it was coming for me. I started to write that story, called "Pity Party," but it was too painful to get through, so it's not in this issue, sorry. Now that I am retired, I can make that the only nice story in the next issue, to balance the flood of bile that we all know is coming. Lap it up, kids, this show won't last forever. Everything ends, eventually.

*Why do they keep asking why I do these things? I do these things to make them ask why. - Eric Staller*

# MY NAME IS

# Not Nick

PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS CALLED ME JOSH, which is not that unusual when you consider that my government name is Joshua and I go by Josh in all of my professional dealings. It's also on my driver's license, my credit cards, my luggage, even your mom's tramp stamp. Hell, it's even part of my e-mail address! I have always wanted to get a cooler nickname than Josh, but I have never gotten one that stuck for more than a few months. I like to give out nicknames like people give out candy on Halloween, so thanks for reading my zine, Snickers.

I am not sure why I've never been given a good nickname that stuck. I really hate it when people call me stupid, generic nicknames like sport, champ, buddy or fella. My name's not fella! But I wouldn't mind being called Captain Schlongo the Magnificent, Johnny Wadd or Big Daddy. Many years ago I told this fact to my wife and our friend Natasha and they both started referring to me as "T.," as in "Token Teabag," because I was the only guy in the threesome. I really liked that and when I think about that short-lived nickname, it always makes me smile. The three of us took a long vacation together to Seattle and Vancouver and kept a group journal of our trip. I was often portrayed as a smiling head on top of a dangling scrotum which was being dunked in hot water.

It was fun while it lasted, but then we moved away from Natasha and the name faded from use. When I was into the *X-Files* I thought it was so cool how they were always called Mulder and Scully and most viewers didn't even know their first names. When my wife started a new job, after a few months they started calling her Saitz at the office and she loved it. No one in my entire life has ever referred to me as Saitz and my wife gets called Saitz within months of getting the name, by strangers at work. I guess I will always be just Jøsh.

Most people try to give their kids whatever they didn't have as kids and I am no different. I want my kids to have two parents who love each other, a stable address, healthy food, a smoke-free environment and, most of all, I want them to have nicknames by the bushel.

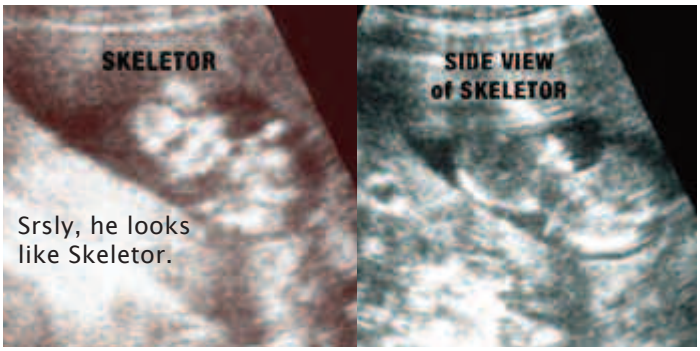
Before he was born, we talked about a baby as a theoretical entity. I am sure some day he will read this and think that we're either the coolest people in the world or the biggest dicks around. It was always named "babybug" since my wife is the Julibug. My wife would say cute things like, "When we finally have a babybug, we'll go on vacation to Vermont, right?" and I would agree. Once we found out about the pregnancy, the cluster of cells became Zyggy the Zygote. I would say hello to Zyggy at the gym and sometimes I would kiss it good night.

The first sonogram was kind of weird. It looked like a little seahorse resting on the side of a fishbowl, so we would talk to each other about how the seahorse was growing. I read some web sites about seahorses and it made the whole thing seem even more abstract. By the next sonogram, my wife said that it looked like "Skeletor Devil Baby."

It would be another few months before we got the sonogram where the guy told us that we were having a boy. From then on, we knew we had a challenge: to find the perfect name for our firstborn son. Since I tend to be obsessive about naming things, I thought I'd share my basic criteria. The name must be one that has been used in the past but should not be too common now. My gauge is, did anyone have this name 100 years ago? There should be only one way to spell it and pronounce it, to make it easier for the kid to get through life. As this story indicates, having an easy nickname is a must, though. The name must also go well with the last name; Geronimo Saitz sounds odd no matter who says it. Everyone has a short list of names they think they would give to their kid, and I am no different. Most Jews name their kids after deceased relatives, but the names of the two in my family have already been used by my brother as middle names for his sons. Besides, I'm a bad Jew because I don't believe in God, I don't go to temple, and I think that Israel is doing some fucked up shit. I don't eat pork or work on Saturdays but that is because of the movie *Babe* and my laziness, respectively.

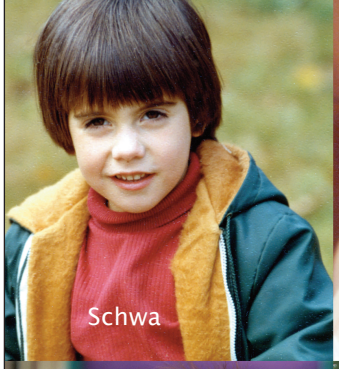
Naming a kid involves a lot of negotiation and compromise, and you have to be open to the idea that someone else may come up with a name you like better than all of your own suggestions. Since my wife and I spent our formative years enjoying BritPop (for her, the Smiths, for me, the Boo Radleys and Blur), we both have a tendency toward English names. Before we had ever met, we both fell in love with the name Julian. We also love other classic English names like Damon, Graham, Henry, Oliver and Desmond. We finally settled on the combo of Julian Graham and let the name sink in. After some consideration, we decided that Julian is too close to my wife's name, Julianna. We didn't want people to think that he was named after my wife, because he isn't. As the date got closer, we had a change of heart. We both felt that the baby was not a Julian, he was an Oliver. Ollie, the baby bug. The name had long fallen out of favor in the U.S. and was last in the top 100 in the 1920s, but it remains in the top 10 in the U.K. We figured we would only get one chance to name a kid and that was the name we liked the most at the time. Some people said it was a little wimpy or gay, but no one says that about Oliver Stone, Oliver Hardy (of Laurel & Hardy) or Oliver North, but maybe it's the last name that makes them seem tough. I also like that if the kid wanted to drop the last name, he could get away with being Oliver Graham. After we had chosen it, I also realized that my dad's initials and the place where I was born (L.I.) were actually in the kid's first name and I liked that.

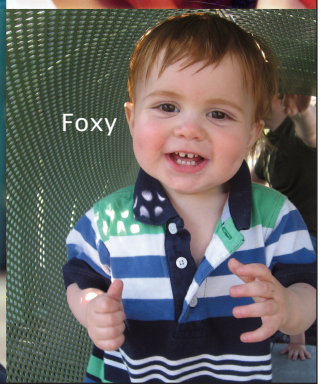
When he was first born, we called him Ollie more than anything else. In New York City there is a popular chain called Ollie's Noodle House, and I used to joke that Oliver worked there as part of their






*No orator can top the one who can give good nicknames. - Ralph Waldo Emerson*






baby intern program. I said that at work he went by his Vietnamese name, Tran, so as not to make people think he was the owner. Then I would sing him songs about it, "Tran, Tran, the noodle man, does what he wants, does what he can." When his cousin Nathaniel came to visit, we called him Phan and said that they both worked together making noodles. For special occasions, I would get gifts for my wife from the kid and write in the card about how Oliver had been putting in extra shifts at the noodle factory to buy the presents. That evolved into calling him Noodles instead of Tran. He went through a whole series of other nicknames that lasted from a few days to a few weeks. My grandmother calls him Oliver Graham Crackers. My mother-in-law calls him Oliver Wendell Holmes. At my old job, my friends called him OG, as in Original Gangster. My friend Rob calls him Ollie G, like Ali G. My wife's trainer always calls him Graham, and he does answer to it, but the trainer is a guy who has always used a nickname—probably because his nickname *is* actually Nick.

My wife never wanted kids but after talking about it over many years, we agreed that we should have just one. It would be relatively easy, it was affordable, and we thought that if it was two-on-one, we could keep the whole situation manageable. After living with Oliver for a while, we realized how much fun it is to have a kid around. We also thought more and more about kids who grow up without siblings and how sad that would be. Most parents go through this process and it is difficult to balance wanting to give one kid everything and not wanting to make that one kid into a selfish, spoiled weirdo.

Since we had Ollie, my wife has fallen in love with the name Oscar and the nickname Ozzy, which would make the kids Ollie and Ozzy. Unfortunately for her, I have a few negative associations with the name. My asshole boss had a dog named Oscar, there's that stupid award, and the most famous Oscars are a grouch, a designer and a boxer, not exactly good company. As part of the ongoing negotiations, I said that if we were ever crazy enough to have three, and they were all boys, she could name the last boy Oscar. I figured that it would never come to pass and as of this writing, we are still safe. Having boys doesn't seem to be the issue since my great-grandfather had two boys, my father had two boys, my brother has two boys, my sister has two boys, and so all signs were pointing to us having two boys as well.

As soon as we had this conversation, I said, "You know, we have already decided that we're having two, we just haven't accepted the decision." My wife agreed and the next week we started our thrilling ttc (trying to conceive) sex where you have to do it on certain days whether she pays you or not. When we learned that #2 was also a boy, the name Julian went to the top of our lists. I have always liked names with an "x" in them, like Alex, Max and Dexter, but names ending with "x" don't work well with the surname Saitz. Just try Max Saitz on for size. It just doesn't work. We agreed on Julian and then tried to find the perfect middle name that has an "x" in it. After going through the various permutations in my head (Julian Rex, Maddox, Max, Dexter), I remembered that Fox Mulder on *The X-Files* was named after one of creator Chris Carter's childhood friends. I also read that Matthew Fox was often called "Foxy" on the set of *Lost* and I loved that as a nickname, so we agreed he would be named Julian Fox when he was born.

We could not have known that he would be born with a head full of red hair, like a little fox. Nor could we have known that he would not be the Don, nor would he be the Patrick, he is just as adorable as his older brother, but in a different way. Since his birth, I have called him Julian less than a dozen times; he's "Baby Foxy."

As he grew and developed, we realized that he looks an awful lot like Juli's father. The interesting thing is that we came to calling him Foxy on our own, but when we started calling him Foxy Tommy after Juli's dad, I realized that her father is not even named Tommy. He is John Thomas, but ever since he was a little kid, as is the tradition in his family, he has been called by his middle name. We are continuing the tradition of calling the men of the family by their middle name, with Foxy at least.

Of course, with me, the nicknames never end. We have called Foxy all kinds of different names from Spongebob (when his teeth came in there was a huge gap between the top two), to "Spare Juli" because he looks just like my wife, to "Baby Carrots" because of his red hair. He was Fantastic Mr. Fox for a few months when the movie came out.

Some of the nicknames have obscure origins, but I remember them all. My wife and I most often call him "Baby Graby," which is based on this very old tape of Ben Stern (Howard Stern's father) where he sings, "Baby, baby, baby, baby." I am sure it's some old song that I don't know, but I bastardized it to "baby graby," and whenever my wife refers to him, she just calls him "graby." Most recently I have been calling him Foxo and I sing the Village People's classic "Macho Man" to him as "Foxo, Foxo man, I want to be, with Fox-o man!" It will never stick.

Ever since he could walk, he has been a very physical kid. He will try to climb up on anything and has taken some spectacular falls. I am not going into details, I feel guilty enough already, but it did inspire the nickname Maniac. The twist is that we always pronounce it, "mahn-e-ack," because it seems even more maniacal. He's already had two surgeries.

Most people's names can be made into a verb, even if it requires a minor misspelling, or a weasel, as I call it. When I told my wife this, she didn't believe me so I went through a few names she knows. Her trainer is Nick (to steal) and my former co-worker is Rob (ditto). In my family we have me, Josh, and josh is a verb all by itself. My brother Ben becomes Bend (over) with just the addition of a letter. I usually make my sister Jen into jentrify (to improve), but I am spelling it wrong and that shouldn't count. My son Oliver usually goes by Ollie, which is a skateboard move that I have been doing for a long time. And my poor wife Juli? Well, her name is Juli, pronounced jew-lee (i.e. jew: *verb*; slang; to talk down on price or bargain aggressively).



***A nickname is the hardest stone that the devil can throw at a man. - William Hazlitt***

IT ALL STARTED WITH A SPREADSHEET. As a piece of physical evidence designed to support the argument that the time for a child was now, it was unassailable in its accuracy and thoroughness. If I had gone out and hired an accountant to come up with the same spreadsheet, it would have cost me thousands of dollars, but luckily I married one of the top performers in the field and for just a few kisses, she put together this amazing plan.

There were four worksheets in the document. The first concerned our housing situation. We were living in a 700 sq. ft. one-bedroom in a nice building, but it was not big enough for three of us. My wife proposed to put the baby and the crib in a very large closet near the front door but I thought that might have an adverse effect on the baby. In order to plan accurately, we put our salaries in rows and then projected three years into the future.

The second sheet was called "Closing Costs," and it contained various scenarios for our housing. New York City real estate is beyond intimidating if you don't have money. Condo vs. co-op was a major issue, since they both have their pros and cons. The upside of a condo is that you only have to put 10 percent down and there's no board approval, but the downside is, all of your neighbors probably put 10 percent down and didn't need to get any board approval. For a co-op, there is usually a minimum of 20 percent down and you have to put together a comprehensive board package that includes six letters of recommendation, tax returns, bank statements and I do remember them taking a semen sample, though now that I think about it, that may have been unrelated the housing transaction. At the bottom of this worksheet were various price points and how they would work out on a monthly basis depending on whether we had to put down 10, 15 or 20 percent. There were also variables in each formula, so if we wanted to run the numbers for an actual apartment that we were looking at, we could plug in the interest rate, down payment and closing costs to see where we ended up.

The third sheet concerned the projected growth of all our retirement savings and how this housing purchase would affect our long-term financial goals. When I see it all laid out like this, I seem pretty together as a person, which is a wonderful illusion that casts me in a much better light. I have my wife to thank and I do thank her, often and sincerely.

I am not sure why the fourth sheet is even included here, but it is concerned with our Star Points account, which is the "bonus miles" plan that we both participate in. We both carry credit cards that earn these points and my wife wanted to see what our balance would be, projected out into the future, but you can read all about why this is important it in "How to Jew a Dime Out of a Nickel" on page 45.

I think that to most people, children are the embodiment of our unrealized potential as people. I don't see things that way at all. My sons are not a second chance to right all the wrongs in my life. I feel like I know these cool kids who are a lot like my wife, who I love, but they are their own little people and they're mine to discover. But at this age, they're just not that bright. If a yellow lab is as smart a 3-year-old boy, then my wonderful son Foxy is still dumber than a dog. Of course, when I started this piece, he was clearly dumber than a dog, eating food off the ground, tripping over his own feet, and unable to put together a sentence. But now that I am close to finishing, he's gotten smarter than a dog. He can tell me where it hurts and he can clean up. I can even ask him to bring me the red sneakers, and he will immediately return with the correct color sneakers. Dogs are colorblind, so fuck them.

When people say that their pets are like their children, you know that they are just kidding themselves. The main difference is that eventually, my child will stop shitting in his pants and start shitting in the toilet. Also, as far as I know, my son has never eaten his own shit, nor has he chased his tail. He's small potatoes. He has no fear of vacuums, never gets worms, and I rarely worry that the neighbor's kid will break into my yard and impregnate my son. He's sterile, you see, so you're wasting all that good humping.

I've heard people say that the sound they loved most was the pitter-patter of little feet and I always thought that sounded totally gay to me. But you know what? I am the Queen of Fags now because just listening to my son Oliver's bare feet slapping on the hardwood makes me so happy I could burst. Please, stick your cock in my mouth, I deserve it.

We had a very good reason for having a child of our own instead of adopting one of the unwanted or mistreated youths littering the social services system. We wanted a good excuse to buy some baby accessories. After all, we're white and live on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. That's what we do here, just like the tabaccer spittin' contests in yer hometown, Cletus. The actual reason we did it was because we have abused our bodies with drugs and alcohol for so many years that we will need spare parts, what better source could we find than the newly minted bodies of our offspring? I like to think of the kids not as an extension of me or my wife, but rather as a life-support system for my future lungs and liver. What are the boys going to think when they read this? Hopefully in the future people will have a better sense of sarcasm and irony.

illustration by Garett Holden

I couldn't swallow pills until I was 21. When I would try, the pill would get stuck in my throat, causing me to choke.

I haven't had sex with anyone besides my wife since 1992, the year I graduated college, but I didn't meet her until 1994.

I like to eat fruit, but not in fruit form. I prefer strawberries and veggies freeze-dried, bananes to be flattened and dried, and I love frozen fruit pureed into smoothies. My issue with fruit is the lack of flavor consistency. I think it's weird that there's so much variation in the flavor of real food; sometimes two strawberries from the same package don't taste the same, but Heinz ketchup is always the exact same flavor, even in Amsterdam at the Albert Hejn market.

When you take out the garbage, it's like your house is taking a shit and someone else has to clean that shit up.

I will never wear flip-flops because I think they are the laziest form of shoes in the world. In addition, I hate having anything between my toes because it completely skeeves me out. I don't wear open-toed shoes or sandals (except in the shower at the gym) because you need to protect your feet from the elements. I was once walking on 57th Street behind this girl who was wearing flip-flops. A construction worker hocked a huge loogie and spit it at the gutter in the street. She happened to step in the way just in time, and the entire wad was dripping phlegm and saliva all over her bare feet and toes. That would never have happened if she had just worn shoes like a normal person.

It was never cool to do one of those lists where you say what is cool, what was cool before, and what is not cool anymore.

The last day that I worked a regular job was December 7th, 2007, Pearl Harbor Day. I call it my retirement day, but in the Blade Runner sense of the term "retirement."

As a kid I was never into sports but my brother always was. He once asked me what my favorite football team was because he liked the Dallas Cowboys and he wanted "his" team to beat whatever team that I liked. I had no favorite team, so my brother showed me pictures of all their helmets. The only helmet that I really liked was the Miami Dolphins' because it has a dolphin, wearing a helmet, jumping through a ring of fire. Nothing in the world says football to me like a dolphin and a ring of fire. This infuriated my brother, who insisted that I needed to have a better reason to like a team besides the helmet. The Dolphins are still the only sports team I ever root for and yet I have no idea who plays for the team and I never watch them. It still makes me happy to hear that the Dolphins have won or that the Cowboys have lost.

Former President Gerald Ford was born Leslie Lynch King and was named after his biological father. After his parents got divorced, they re-named him after his step-father, Gerald Rudolph Ford. He was also the only U.S. president who was never elected to be president or vice president. I know this isn't a fact about me, but it's an interesting fact and as soon as I read it, I wanted to share. Also, the only president ever to win an Emmy was Richard Nixon, believe it or not.

I was unanimously voted president of the co-op board of my building and besides my family, I am the youngest resident. They have never seen this zine but it's too late now. They won't even let me out, even though I am sick of all of the responsibility and threaten to quit often.

A chicken named Mike lived for years after having his head cut off. Wiki it, bro.

I used to worry that I would get drafted by the Army and I always thought that moving to Canada or blowing a guy were viable options to get me out of it. Finally, I am too old.

I got my first computer, a Commodore 64, in 1982 and within six months I had a BBS running and had cracked the copy protection on a few of my games. I also had the 400K external floppy drive and a state-of-the-art 300 baud Hayes-compatible modem. (For reference, shitty dial up is 56,000 baud.) I used my first Mac in 1985 and have never owned a PC, nor have I ever paid for anything by Microsoft.

I always make the bed, I don't leave dishes in the sink, and I often shower twice a day.

I am not afraid of heights, but I am afraid of depths, which explains why I won't go into a mine, an underground cave or go scuba diving. The air is here, I need the air to live, therefore I will spend my life where the air is. This is my poetry.

I didn't get a passport until I was 20; my son got one when he was 3 months old. He has logged more miles in his first 3 years than I did in my first 25. Until he is almost 6, his passport picture will be of a 3-month-old baby.

My immediate family has two members who sound like they would be black but are not. My brother is an Uncle Ben and my father-in-law is an Uncle Tom.

The mosquito is responsible for more deaths than any other animal in the world. I am responsible for the deaths of thousands of mosquitos. No need for a parade.

I have never been at the same school for more than two years in a row in my entire life and it was usually because we moved.

I have had the same doctor since 1995, when I picked his name from my insurance company's list just because it sounded Jewish. He's easily 70 pounds overweight and his medical speciality is weight management. I love him because I can call his secretary with symptoms and get pills called into my pharmacy within an hour.

A pity fuck still counts.

When I am rich, I would like to have a come butler, a middle-aged white man in a tux who would step out of a hidden closet after sexual encounters to clean me and my partner with a warm, damp towel and then leave some mints and iced beverages before stepping back into the closet.



As a sullen 12-year-old, I played Dungeons and Dragons at a store called Waterloo on Long Island. My mom would drop me off with a bunch of creepy older dudes and I'd take my made-up characters on adventures. I mention this only because my wife thinks she's never slept with someone who's played D&D. I also played a ripoff version called Tunnels & Trolls which I thought was even better than the original.

These are things I hate: people who use cell phones at the gym, Hitler, Natalie, Stuart, Jocelyn and cancer. In that order.

I have more gay friends on Facebook than exes that I have had sex with.

I have never had a wet dream.

The saddest thing about getting older is that you become what you hate and you hate what you've become.

# Callback

When I am dead and gone, I doubt that anyone outside my family will remember much about me, my life or my work. If I can make a lasting contribution to the culture, I would like to coin phrases that gain widespread usage and that people continue to use for years to come. Even if I didn't invent the original phrase, I still want credit for taking it out of context, making it funny, and popularizing it.

When I was kid, I remember that every now and again a new word would come into popular usage as slang for "cool." Some people chose rad or gnarly, some went for wicked and I decided to try saying turbo instead of cool. It was a dismal failure. When *Swingers* came out, everyone was suddenly "so money," and out of nowhere, a word we all knew was used in a new way. But like all fads, we always end up coming back to cool, even if it's not so cool anymore. And that's hot.

I am not really sure how to introduce this collection of words and phrases that I have repurposed in this way, along with my explanation of the etymology. This piece was originally called "Explaining the Story of the Beginning of the Origin," but I realized that this is a zine, not a Morrissey song. For most of its production, I assumed that whichever idea I liked the best would end up being the title of the collection, which meant that it would be "Putting on a Tit Show." As I was designing these very pages, I realized that all of the things that I am doing are variations on the "callback." If I am going to use the term, the least I can do is cut and paste the Wikipedia entry on the subject: "A callback, in terms of comedy, is a joke which refers to one previously told in the set. The second joke is often presented in a different context than the one which was used in the initial joke. Callbacks are usually used at or near the end of a set, as the aim is to create the biggest laugh at the end of a comic set. The main principle behind the callback is to make the audience feel a sense of familiarity with the subject matter, as well as with the comedian. It helps to create audience rapport. When the second joke is told, it induces a feeling similar to that of being told a personal or in-joke."

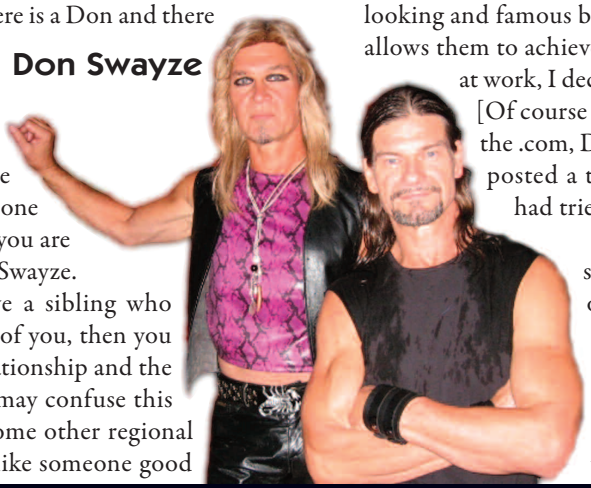
I tend to regard the people who read this zine as old friends who sometimes like me and sometimes think I am an asshole. I really want to reward people like that by making them laugh like crazy, feel smart when they get a reference, and feel like they are on the inside of a group, laughing at our inside jokes. These are the jokes that I have been sharing with the people in my life for many years and I want to share them with you, so when I do the callback in a future issue, you'll get it, get it? I will also include some related video clips in the web version of this story if you are interested in seeing the source for some of these hilarious phrases and expressions.



## What would something like that pay?

This is the best way to respond when someone asks you to do work for free. It's from the series *Kids in the Hall* and Bruce plays Gavin, the neighborhood annoying kid. He is pestering Mark, a neighbor who is standing outside painting a chair. Gavin just blabs on and on about all kinds of arcane nonsense but Mark just keeps on painting, despite his hangover. Then Gavin asks nicely if he can paint the chair. Mark rebuffs him, but Gavin is insistent. He keeps asking and asking until Mark gets so sick of him he says, "Here, you can paint this bit here." Without missing a beat, Gavin says, "What would something like that pay?" Here's a great way to use it in real life. Your friend says, "Would you like to help me move?" Your answer is always, "What would something like that pay?"

## Don Swayze



For every person in the world, there is a Don and there is a Patrick. The Patrick is handsome, confident and assured, while the Don is surly, malformed and squinty. For every famous person, there may be dozens of Don Swayzes. If people tell you that you sorta look like someone famous, only one chromosome shy, you are probably that famous person's Don Swayze.

On the other hand, if you have a sibling who comes across like a hillbilly version of you, then you may in fact be the Patrick in the relationship and the world is your oyster. Some people may confuse this with the "poor man's version," or some other regional variant, but a true Don must look like someone good looking and famous but just be missing that certain something that allows them to achieve what the original has. One boring afternoon at work, I decided to buy the domain name donswayze.com. [Of course it wasn't taken!] A few months after I bought the .com, Don Swayze himself bought donswayze.net and posted a trailer and some headshots. I wondered if he had tried to get the .com and settled for the .net.

The sad thing is that due to Patrick's illness and smoking, toward the end of his life he became his own Don Swayze. Don is now the best Swayze we have left, so we should treat him like the national treasure that he is. My brother is my Don [j/k, bro], but I have many Patricks who are famous. Note that for women, you should call the homelier one the "Donna Swayze."

## Did you see the guy that ate Boy George?

Whenever someone famous starts to hit the wall, I always ask about them as if it's not them, but rather a busted version of them, like they have become their own Don Swayze. What the hell happened to Robert Plant's grandmother? She looks horrible! Did you see the guy that ate Boy George? Or the woman who ate the blonde chick from Heart? I always goof on people who completely lose their looks, especially if the majority of their career was made on their looks. Tom Hanks' dad has terrible hair! Oh, dear, Imus's corpse is grotesquely rotting. Who sucked the air out of Al Roker's creepy uncle? Looks like Michael Keaton's dad has cancer.

## The Raymond Segment

As far as I am concerned, every person's funeral should end with a Raymond Segment because it's the best way to stay in the minds of friends. One of my favorite shows for pure bizarre laughs is *Space Ghost: Coast to Coast*. It's a crazy, disjointed talk show hosted by a cartoon superhero who doesn't really care about his guests and regularly assaults his co-workers. On one especially memorable Spike Feresten episode ("Hungry"), everyone on the show was very hungry, so they ordered pizzas. When Space Ghost turns to his bandleader, Zorak, he notices that there is a little version of Zorak standing next to him. Space Ghost asks Zorak, "What's with the action figure?" and Zorak says that it's his nephew, Raymond. They place their order for pizzas and then continue with the rest of the show. Every time Space Ghost talks to Zorak, Raymond just says, "Hi," or "Hello," in an adorable child's voice. Towards the end of the show, as everyone is getting more hungry and impatient, Space Ghost starts to lose his mind, as always. He starts talking to Zorak and notices that Raymond is gone. He says to Zorak, "Hey, what happened to Raymond?" and Zorak, without missing a beat says, "Oh, I devoured him." Space Ghost looks horrified and says, "That's barbaric!" and then pauses and asks, "Is there any left?" When Zorak says no, Space Ghost says very sadly, "I'm going to miss the little guy..." and then they cut to "The Raymond Segment." They play sad music behind a lovely montage of all the great moments that Space Ghost, Zorak and Raymond had together: going to Mt. Rushmore, washing in the bathtub, flying a kite in front of a tornado, and then a beautiful fade out. It's very sweet and touching to see Raymond's whole life summed up in a slideshow to sad music and it's so good that most reality shows now employ the Raymond Segment whenever someone gets kicked off. The reason it works so well on *Space Ghost* is that it's a total mockery of the phony sentimentality that you see on TV all the time. Space Ghost only met Raymond five minutes earlier, yet the instant tribute to the dead is so earnest that you actually start to feel sad for little Raymond. Why should I care that some fatso gets kicked off the *Biggest Loser*? Well, if you play a slow, sad montage of black-and-white footage of that person having fun, with a touching song about friendship and loss in the background, you'll remind me why I cared about this loser in the first place.

## Carpet Monkey

There was a famous study done to scientifically determine whether or not being loved helped in growth and development. Some scientists, who were insane, thought that the reason a baby monkey flourished was because it got to be near a warm, soft body, not because it was loved. So they did this experiment where some monkeys got to be with their mothers, and a bunch of other monkeys were left alone in a cage with a monkey made out of carpet. It didn't really even look like a monkey but it was made of carpet and was meant to simulate the monkey's existence if the baby monkey had been with his mother. See, the only real difference between hugging a carpet monkey and your own biological mother is love. The results were that the carpet monkey babies weighed less, got sick more often and, in some cases, they died. That's pretty fucked up. I hope that the knowledge helps science somehow because I can't imagine having my mom taken away and being thrown in a cage with a carpet monkey. I don't know why this particular expression has been so enduring in my life. Sometimes when you get mad at your folks, you wonder if it wouldn't have been better to be raised by a carpet monkey.

## It's made from monkey come!



Any time my wife and I can't identify the flavor of something, we say that it's made from monkey come in a Slavik accent that sounds like Borat. The original speaker was either Bosnian or Serbian, but what's the difference, really? It's from the underrated Kids in the Hall movie *Brain Candy*. In the movie, scientists come up with a drug that makes everyone happy. Mark McKinney plays a surly cabbie (quoted at the foot of this page, talking about his mother) who is driving some kids around when they start talking about the drug. He turns to them with sneering contempt and says, "It's made from monkey come," and then explains how they get the monkeys to come so they can harvest it.

## Good from afar, but far from good

My wife's friend Nathan Fan is responsible for introducing me to this little gem and they both have used it so often I had to include it. It's a roundabout way of saying that someone is not totally repulsive, but not that attractive either, and I am sure you can think of at least one person who looks better the further away you are.

## Wash your pussy!

This expression may be older than dirt but I first heard it from Artie Lange on Howard Stern's show on Sirius. Whenever a guy who has cultivated an image that they are somewhat manly does something that is very effeminate, like crying at a press conference when retiring from football, the best response is to say, "Wash your pussy!" For some reason, my wife thought that this was a very rude way of saying that someone's vagina was dirty, but really, it's a way to call a grown man a woman, because only a woman has a pussy to wash.

## Touché, My Young Son

*Dr. Katz: Professional Therapist* featured comedian Jonathan Katz as a therapist and H. Jon Benjamin as his lazy, overgrown, unemployed son, Ben. In one episode, Dr. Katz has the cleaning lady discard the contents of the linen closet. When 26-year-old Ben comes home, he finds his favorite stuffed animal, Bully the bull, in the dumpster outside. Ben then confronts his dad about it and when his dad points out that Ben is being childish about it, Ben replies, clearly flustered, "What are you trying to say, that because I have a stuffed animal I am not an adult?" Dr. Katz smiles and deadpans, "I think you said

***When I was little, my mother used to sing me a song, "Life is short, life is shit, and soon it will be over."***

it eloquently. All I'm saying is that we need the use of that closet." Ben says, "I have *human* friends, too." After thinking about it for a moment, Dr. Katz asks Ben, "Would you keep *them* in the linen closet?" Ben immediately replies, "Would you throw *them* out?" to which Dr. Katz gives his classic reply, "Touché, my young son." It means you've just heard a good counter-argument.

## It's a Bunch of "Who Shot John"

I got this nugget from Judge Judy during my brief fixation with her show. There was a time when I had at least 10 episodes on my TiVo and watched one every night before bed to mellow out. Watching retards get smacked down by a woman who is just like every bossy little woman in my family is very entertaining. On some level, I know it was like watching rats fight over a crouton—the amounts were often so tiny it's surprising that anyone thought it was worth litigating, but whatever.org. One of her favorite expressions was, "Don't give me a lot of 'who shot John,' sir." I always assumed it had something to do with the Kennedy assassination, because all of the different accounts of who shot John (Kennedy) were contradictory. There are a few definitions on Urban Dictionary, each entertaining in its own way. The first is, "When you ask someone if they know who did a certain thing, and they give you an answer that you know is bullshit." (i.e. Don't come in here with that "who shot John" bullshit. The second is, "Used by John Wayne in his last film with a young Ron Howard to describe another gunslinger's actions after he got drunk. He used the term 'who shot John' to describe the whiskey (i.e. 'You never know what he might do once he gets enough of that "who shot John" in him, Pilgrum!')." My own personal favorite is, "Something totally worthless and meaningless." In context, "Like I care who shot John!"

## Why is the mummy mad?

It's meant as a rhetorical question even though I know that there is probably a legitimate answer to the question. I was thinking about all of the great cinematic monsters, and their motivations are usually quite clear. They all kill and destroy for various reasons. Dracula and other vampires need to feed on human blood to survive. Freddy Krueger was burned alive by the parents in a small town so he takes revenge by killing their children in their dreams. Godzilla is a hideous freak who was deformed by radiation, so we all know why he's pissed off. Whenever I come upon a problem that can't be solved, I ask, "Why is the mummy mad?" Maybe he was in a deep sleep and some jackass woke him up, or maybe has no choice, he's just acting on a curse that was put on him thousands of years ago. It's a question I ask like a Buddhist asking what is the sound of one hand clapping. It sounds like the reason the mummy is mad.

## You Park Nice!

I really don't like the French. It's been my experience with them that they are pompous douchebags. From oily Claude, the guy who sold me a used car and then dated my friend, to the pretentious freaks at Cirque du Soleil, they are a bunch of weirdos. I do love lime Perrier, though. My wife and I went to Montreal for a vacation because we like Canada and it's a very short flight. We landed after 11PM and then used GPS to locate the hotel. Some stuff is just in French, but I took four years of French in high school and I still understand a lot of it. We figured it would be really expensive to park at the hotel, so we parked at a lot, half a block away, which was almost empty. It was below freezing when we landed and it was even colder by the time we got to the lot. I pulled up to the booth and got out to talk to the attendant. He looked like Henri from *Cheers*, the douchey French guy who wanted to steal Woody's girlfriend, with the black cigarette, stubble and flowing scarf. I asked how much and he said $20 for the night, but I had to be out by 8AM or it would cost more. I hadn't had a chance to get Canadian money, but most places will give you change. At the time, the U.S. dollar was worth $1.40 in Canada. I said that all I had was a $20 bill and he snatched it out of my hand. I knew I was getting taken but the moisture in my nose was freezing up with ice crystals from standing outside and I really needed to go to sleep.

I got back in my rental car and drove to the aisle closest to the hotel. The car next to me was halfway into my spot so I compensated. After bundling up, we got out of the car and gathered up our luggage. As we walked away from the lot, Frenchie came chasing after us, full of *Le French Contempte*, and said, "You park nice!" I didn't understand what he meant and I looked at the cars. By the stripes on the ground, the other guy had not "parked nice" either and to give us room to open the doors, I had parked according to the placement of the cars, not the stripes painted on the ground. Apparently, this park was not "nice," so I had to get back in the car, back up, straighten out and then try to please Frenchie. So now whenever one of us hasn't done anything wrong but you want to scold them anyway, we say, "You park nice!" Or when someone does a good job on something, "You paint nice! You make baby nice!" I don't think we have ever done it with a French accent, for some reason we always sound like Borat. I zine nice, yes?



## Come back to us, we over here.

On the *South Park* CD *Chef Aid* there's a duet with Chef and Meatloaf called, "Tonight is Right for Love (with Meredith Baxter-Birney)." In the song, Chef sings about love and about all the ways he's going to pleasure Meredith and when Meatloaf joins in, Meat goes completely over the top, singing about the torture of love with splinters of wood being forced into his eyes. When Meat starts screaming in pain, Chef stops the song and gently reminds Meat that the song is about Meredith Baxter-Birney and not about having a splinter of wood in your eye. Then he says, "Come back to us, we over here. Here, have a taco." Meatloaf says, "Oh, great, taco!" and then you hear the sound of Meat crunching through a taco shell. It's a perfect way to talk someone down who has completely lost control of a situation. My wife uses this to cheer me up all the time.

Do you even care that she's 14? That her father is currently a member of the Nazi party? That she has herpes and is an alcoholic? Does any of that diminish the joy you get from merely enjoying the frauleinztitzenshow?

*Think of how stupid the average person is, and realize half of them are stupider than that. - George Carlin*

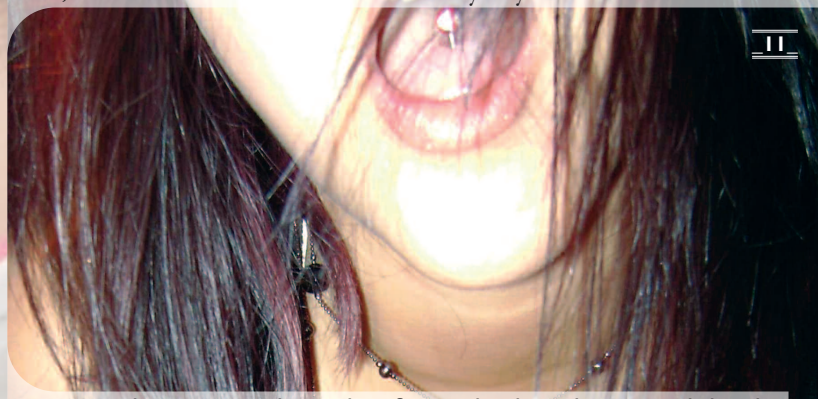
As my long-time readers know, I am an ass man. You can say what you like about a full, round rack or ramble on about the delights of the vajayjay, but for me, if ya ain't got ass, ya ain't got a ride home from *me*. Let me be clear: I am not into anal sex. In fact I have never had it, pitching or catching, but that's okay. I like to look at a fine ass and I personally believe that the thong is just about the single most amazing hoax that men have perpetrated on women since making them take the pill. We have somehow convinced them that letting their entire ass hang out of their panties is not only comfortable, but that it's preferable, especially if you are hot. Could you imagine a dude wearing a thong that separated his balls into two separate areas? If you're not retching, you must be a girl. Or a girly version of a man. You know who you are. That being said, whenever a woman wears a top that in any way accentuates her boobs, that is called "putting on a tit show." Most women under the age of sixty are all too aware of which tops they buy which can direct attention toward or away from the boobs, so when they make a conscious decision to showcase their boobs, almost every man and manly girl (you know who you are, too) will want to watch the tit show.

Why do we all want to check it out? Because the tit show is great to watch. There are many celebrities whose entire career was started by putting on a tit show, from Marilyn Monroe to Pam Anderson. The Victoria's Secret catalog should be called *Tit Show Illustrated*, and the biggest issue of *Sports Illustrated* is the Supermodel Tit Show issue. Sometimes you are watching a nice R-rated tit show, like

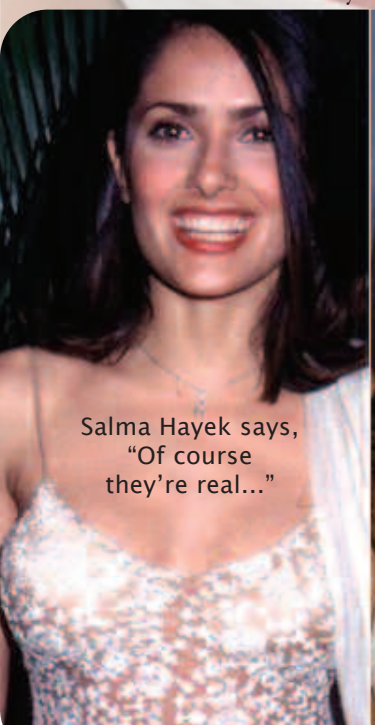
Even if the chick is hideous, even if her boobs are 90 percent fat and 10 percent sloppy, you could check it out. Like snowflakes, no two tit shows are the same.

a nip slip or some side boobage, but the girl realizes that she's hanging out and adjusts her top, bringing it back down to a PG-13 or even a G. That blows. Nothing makes a straight guy's day brighter than seeing a good tit show. Even the French have a single word for the tit show, decolletage, which means they were talking about it so often that it warranted its own word. I recently read a news article (it's on negcap.com) that said scientific research has shown that watching a tit show for ten minutes a day is equivalent to exercising more than half an hour and that it can prolong your life. If just watching a tit show can help me live longer, even my wife ought to be encouraging me to watch. Could someone please explain that to her? [Turns out, the story is bogus, but still.]

I'm not sure if it's in every man's owner's manual, but I think that someone, somewhere, is keeping a tally of how many different boobs you have seen in your life and whoever dies having seen the most is entitled to some kind of undisclosed prize, payable upon death. Maybe it's a flock of virgins, maybe it's a flock of sheep who are also virgins but everyone wants the prize. Age, weight, length, girth, whatever, it makes no difference. Put on a tit show, someone will always want to watch it. I am sure there are guys who are so into the tit show they could get off looking at a mastectomy scar. Now that's not even a tit anymore, it's an ex-tit, and you can still use it to put on a tit show. The reason that it's hot when you can see down a girl's pants when she bends over is because it is also a kind of tit show. You get to see some, but not all, of something you normally have to pay to see (in one way or another). So, it's like getting something that has intrinsic value for free, which is a win-win for me and it's exactly why I love the Tit Show.

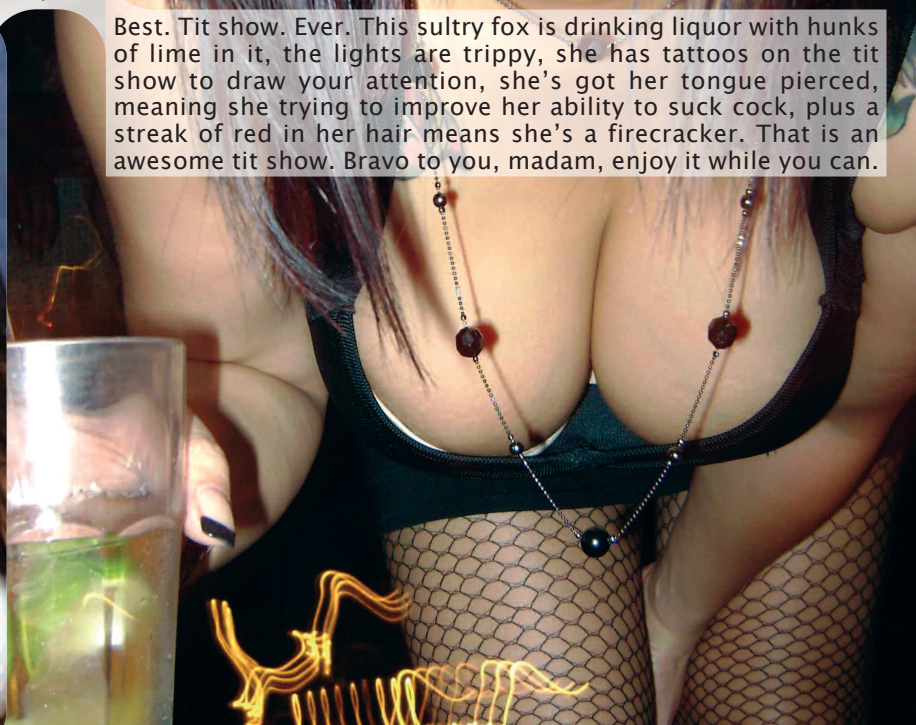


Best. Tit show. Ever. This sultry fox is drinking liquor with hunks of lime in it, the lights are trippy, she has tattoos on the tit show to draw your attention, she's got her tongue pierced, meaning she trying to improve her ability to suck cock, plus a streak of red in her hair means she's a firecracker. That is an awesome tit show. Bravo to you, madam, enjoy it while you can.



Salma Hayek says, "Of course they're real..."

Real expensive.
Real big.
Real good.



# The Greatest Movies You've Never Seen

While I would never call myself a cinema buff because it makes me sound both gay and pretentious, I'm a student of film and take it very seriously as an artform. For the most part, I think we live in an amazing time for creative people. It's only now, in the modern age, that it seems like technology, money and ideas are all coming together to create some of the best films ever made.

Because movie-making is, for many corporations, a business more than an artform, it's become increasingly common for lots of money to be spent in the service of a terrible story, or worse. For every brilliant, original film like *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, there are a dozen crass remakes like *Gloria* and *The Dukes of Hazzard*. It seems like the spectrum keeps expanding with even greater movies entering the public consciousness alongside the most derivative and pointless tripe ever to soil a theater. With all of those potential profits at stake, studios are opting to keep throwing shit at the public, hoping that something will stick. I know it works because fucking *Beverly Hills Chihuahua* made more than $100 million in theaters while a brilliant, edgy and hysterical indictment of modern society like *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut* barely breaks even.



It's like the studio system keeps on feeding you shit and because you don't think that you deserve better, and because you're always hungry (for something fun to do on the weekends), you just keep on eating shit. When I think about it in this context, I realize that it's mostly *your* fault there are so many awful movies out there. Maybe not you, personally, maybe it is, how do I know, Connie? But it's because you allow yourselves to be raked over the coals so repeatedly that I am forced to conclude that you like the taste of shit only because you've been eating it for so long. When you're starving, everything tastes better. But you would be much better off if you waited for something delicious before you broke out the eating utensils.

I have a few friends who work in the movie industry, and they know that movie studios have to release movies on a regular basis. The wheat-to-chaff ratio is low because there is a schedule to fill and it's just not possible for every film to be a brilliant labor of love. Some films seem great because we're comparing them to every film ever made. When a film is compared to a piece of excrement like *Gigli*, almost any movie with reasonable dialogue and a clear plot suddenly seems that much better.

Movies should be held to a different standard, and based on their budgets alone movies ought to be the best entertainment that human beings are capable of. The U.S. is the richest, most powerful and most creative place in the world, and the amount of money we spend making movies is more than the gross national product of some major countries. This does not mean that spending more money will result in better films, it just means that there should no longer be any impediments to greatness.

Even though it may not be obvious, I care about my audience. I want them to know more, to feel more, to think more and, most importantly, to live more. And by "live" I mean to really get the most out of it, to suck the marrow from the bones of life. In fact, when you're done with that, I've got a bone with a mouthful of yummy "marrow" that you can suck, too.

There are a lot of good movies and a few great movies so it's impossible to see everything. Even movie reviewers can't see everything because one of the movies on this list was never released, another was shown in NYC theaters for only a week and is hard to find on DVD. If there is someone out there who has seen them all, I would like to hear from you because I'll be happy to have sex with you, sight unseen. Unless you're that creepy fat dude with the beard who does the "Ain't It Cool News" web site. That dude's a fucking freak and a half.

The point of this piece is twofold. First, I'd like to prove once and for all that I can say something that is nice, sweet, funny and most of all, from the heart. Second, I want you to know that there are some cool films out there that you might not have seen and that you should go and

see them. I know that film criticism, even gushing film praise, is necessarily subjective. But the thing is, if you're reading my zine, you know enough about me to realize where I'm coming from, and I'll give you enough factual information so that you can decide for yourself if it sounds like a particular film is for you.

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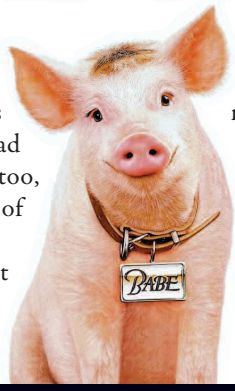
## Babe: Pig in the City

# THIS LITTLE PIG WENT TO THE CITY...

I am one of the most cruel, callous, insensitive, heartless pricks that I've ever known. I often delight in making others miserable, I enjoy seeing others suffer, and sometimes I laugh when planes crash and when old people drive off cliffs. But no matter what, I love that goddamn pig. When I saw this movie in a half-empty theater, I cried. Not sniffling, not that weird tense feeling you get when you think that you *might* cry. I mean, actual tears from actual emotions. And it wasn't just sad tears, I mean, I actually cried happy tears, too, which I thought was the exclusive domain of Jewish mothers and screaming fairies.

The original *Babe* was a blockbuster that made more than $200 million worldwide. George Miller, the writer of the original and director of the sequel, has a gift for storytelling which he displayed in one of his early movies, *Mad Max*. Yeah, that's right. He directed *Mad* Fucking *Max*, the one with that chain-smoking lunatic Mel Gibson. So even if you are already calling me a pussy for loving this movie, you ought to know that you're calling George a pussy, too. And you're also calling Mad Max a pussy and I know that you can't possibly mean that.




When I saw this in the theater, I thought, "This movie is a truly authentic *sequel* because this movie literally picks up exactly where the first film left off." [Spoiler alert?] At the end of *Babe*, the pig wins the big sheep-herding contest and shows the world what one brave pig can do. The first scene in the sequel begins with Babe on his victorious trip back to the farm, right after the big win. To me, that's one of the coolest things ever.



Roscoe Lee Browne narrates both films and he's sweet as pie in both, especially when he says, "A kind and steady heart can mend the world." That's what both films are about and they're two of the most joyful, hopeful and optimistic films ever made. You see how little I care about anything, yet I am totally gay for a pig movie. The thing that really sealed my love for the first movie was when I read that none of the pigs in the film would be murdered and eaten, even though some got their three seconds cut. I realize that it may not seem like much, but to me, the fact that they made that gesture is wonderful.

I don't want to tell you just the plot points because that wouldn't be nice, but I will tell you, like the title does, that Babe ends up in the city, on a very important mission. Unfortunately, when he leaves for the city, his best friend, Ferdinand the duck, doesn't want him to go because Babe is his "good luck pig." The city itself is a source of wonder and amazement, not just for the little country pig, but also for the audience. It's a delicious amalgam of lots of different places and the skyline has many elements from NYC, San Francisco, Sydney (where it was filmed, mostly), Paris, Seattle and even Venice.

Once there, he encounters many new characters and here's where it earns its way onto this list. Most of the characters in movies are not even the slightest bit real. Everyone's a mouthpiece for a writer, who's too pussy to say what he wants in real life, so he puts the words in someone else's mouth. But in *Pig in the City*, all of the animals are real characters, not merely mouthpieces for some frustrated writer. The family of chimps is so clearly drawn by the dialogue that within the first few minutes, you stop caring how they make the animals talk and listen to what they have to say. They're realistic and complex characters. Thelonius, the wise old orangutan, is a completely unique creation. Both preternaturally wise and unaware of what he really is, he instantly comes across to the viewer. He's the old cynic who has seen it all and no longer cares about anything. But the male chimp (voiced by the brilliant comic Steven Wright) is a bully, his wife's a bimbo and his kid is just a regular kid. He's not a smartass, nor a genius, just a regular kid. As a result, you really feel for them because the animals are more interesting as characters than anyone in *Patch Adams*, which is supposedly based on a true story.

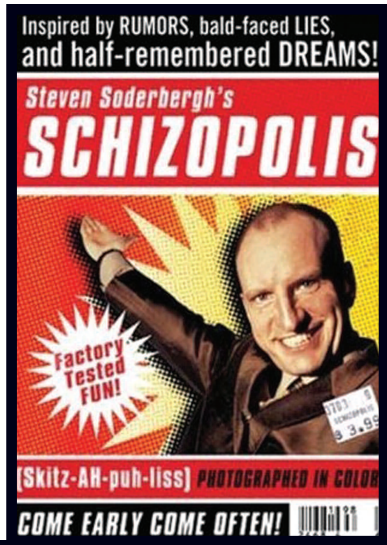
The dialogue is both funny and profound. When the chimps first meet Babe, the wife calls him "a baldie, pinkie, whitey thingie," not because she's trying to sound cute, but because a chimp living in the middle of a city would not have encountered a pig. I tend to be a stickler for using the same voices for characters, but it's really hard to tell that the original voice has been replaced, which is how I like it. In a bit of gonzo casting, Mickey Rooney plays a creepy and deranged clown called Uncle Fugly. The chimps are all actors in his kids' show and if that sounds disturbing, you're starting to get an idea about why this movie cost more than $80 million to make and didn't make nearly that much at the box office. If you are a fan of cute kittens, you cannot beat the one in *Babe*, who mumbles in a baby voice, "I'm hungwy."

### Unmade Beds

This one is hard to find, but I know it's on Netflix. The original reviews called it a "faux" documentary, meaning that not all of it is real. The premise is real people who are looking for love in the personal ads; the film shows you the ad and then the people behind each ad. The first lady is in her 40s and has a teenage daughter. Her dog has a tumor, but she has decided that the dog should keep it. She desperately wants to trade pussy for cash. She finds many different ways to rationalize and justify her attitude, but the bottom line is that she is willing to put out four times a month to pay her bills. She says, "Dick is easy to get—I need money." The second guy is the short man with no confidence who is filmed in his driveway, hand washing his Saturn while saying that girls love to fuck clowns, but not him, the nice guy. Welcome to Low Self-Esteem Theater. The third chick is fat, sad and heinous. She goes out with much older guys and says that finding a man is her full-time job. I think it's pretty obvious that she's about to get laid off from that job but she's in denial. Later, she's on a park bench, crying to her friend that she is seriously thinking about having her gay friend father a child for her so she won't be alone and then while she's crying, she says, "I'm pathetic." Couldn't've said it better myself. If you ever wondered who those people are that place personal ads looking for love, you'll laugh your ass off.

### Schizopolis

This is a good movie to watch if you are high because you won't waste any time trying to make sense of it. It's about a regular guy who gets involved in a strange cult of personality while his double, a dentist, has an alternate life. See, I told you it doesn't make sense, but the best part is that the star is Stephen Soderbergh himself, who also wrote, directed and even interviews himself in character on the commentary track. It's a high-concept joke, or a collection of odd skits, or it's a fever dream of a guy who jerks off far too much. In one of the more memorable scenes he is furtively masturbating in the bathroom, which makes you wonder exactly why he wrote and directed it. Does he really want us as an audience to see him jerking off? It's that kind of sick meta-message that makes this entire movie so bazooka insane.






### The King of Kong

I'm sure that some of you have heard of this movie but if you haven't, it's worth renting. It's a documentary about a rare breed of nerd who is still obsessed with old-school videogames three decades past their peak. It stars a cast of unfuckable virgins who have a pissing contest over who has the high score on Donkey Kong. The story follows a newcomer to the field who is rising to challenge the high score of the acknowledged master of the game, but in order to appease the self-appointed referee of the "sport," any new record high score must be achieved live in front of witnesses in an actual arcade. Star Billy Mitchell is the ultimate blowdried douchebag who is one part Kenny Loggins, two parts mullet-sporting virgin, and all bluster about his historic achievements. Without giving away any of the story, the movie's greatest strength is more often the people rather than the games, but there is real drama, tension and mystery in the telling.

### Air Guitar Nation

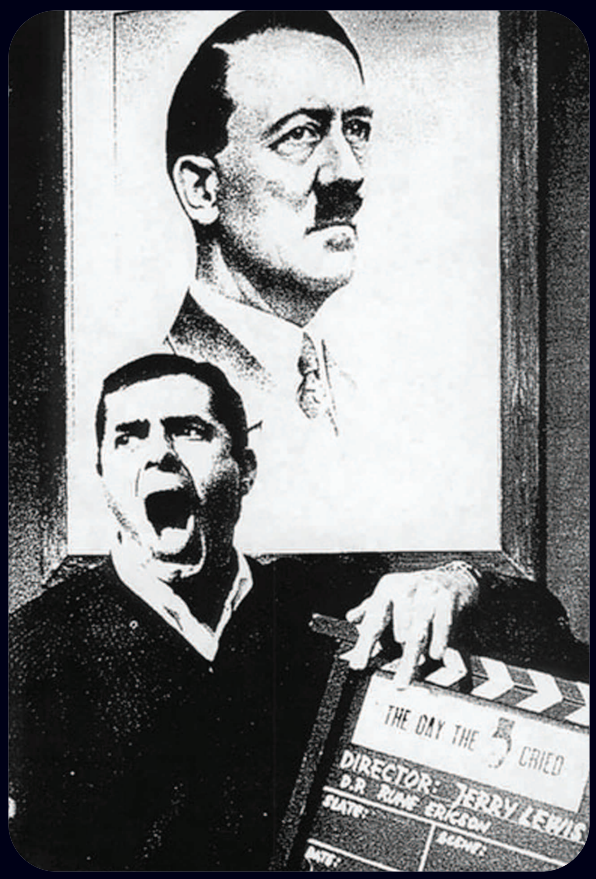
Another great documentary about a little-known sub-culture, this time it's about guys who pretend to play guitar. Every year there is an international competition in Finland, and the film follows two young hopefuls on their journey to air guitar immortality. Besides all the fascinating main characters, there are also many great scenes where people ask the same kinds of questions that are probably filling your head now, like "How do you make money doing that?" and "What nudniks would pay to see that shit?" and, "How do I get started?" One of the many highlights is seeing how these guys live when they're not pursuing their "art," especially the guy who is couch surfing at his brother's place while air-guitar busking to make enough money to buy a plane ticket to Finland. Once the movie gets to the competition, you will be all charged up and ready to see some real sad sacks get down with their air guitars.

### Dead Alive (aka Braindead)

While Peter Jackson may be most famous for *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, his early work was cheap, dirty and fucking hilarious. When a mild-mannered old woman is attacked and bitten by the rare and deadly Sumatran Rat Monkey, she turns into a rotting zombie. This wouldn't be a problem except that she lives with her browbeaten son in a huge house and guests are coming over for dinner. There is romance, drama, humor and one of the goriest, bloodiest scenes ever put on film involving zombies and a lawnmower in an enclosed space. I remember watching it with some friends, and they were noticing layers that had never even occurred to me. The limited budget appears to have forced Jackson and his cohorts to be even more creative to get the shots, and for what is ostensibly a low-budget horror flick, there's a lot more going on than just guts and gore. For fellow trivia nuts, Peter Jackson's remake of *King Kong* featured a sealed wooden crate on the ship that contains a live Sumatran Rat Monkey.

Honorable Mention: *The Tall Guy*, *Shallow Grave*, *Dangerous Days* (an amazing doc about *Blade Runner*).

***I wanted pretty girls to come up and say, "I see you're good at Centipede." - The King of Kong***



# THE DAY THE CLOWN CRIED

(A FILM BY JERRY LEWIS)

Jerry Lewis is a fascinating and deranged dude. The man actually wanted to adapt *Catcher in the Rye*, but J.D. Salinger wisely said no. I can't blame you if you've never seen this unreleased nugget; very few people have. The few that have seen it have spoken out and inadvertently turned it into an underground legend. Jerry Lewis and a partner optioned the rights to a book called *The Day the Clown Cried*. The plot centered around a man named Helmut Doork, a famous clown in the early days of Nazi Germany. His ego gets him into serious trouble and no, it's not about Jerry and it's not a true story.

When Helmut is caught drunkenly mocking Hitler, the Gestapo throw him into a prison camp. While there, his mouth continues to get him in trouble until one day the guards decided they've had enough of his shit and beat the crap out of him in front of some Jewish kids. The kids don't realize that he's really being beaten and they laugh. Helmut realizes that even in a prison camp, he can still entertain the kids. He pretends that the beating is part of a show and continues to amuse the children of the prison. He's accidentally shipped off to Auschwitz with a train car full of kids and it's there that he finds his true calling, leading the children into the "showers" to be executed. I know, it sounds fucking hilarious. The problem was that Jerry's partner had merely purchased the *option* on the book, not the film rights themselves.

The shoot was plagued with setbacks, not the least of which was that their option had expired during shooting, meaning they had no right to shoot the movie. Then Jerry's partner ran out of cash and bailed. Jerry took over, financing the production himself, revising the script and taking over as director. The authors of the book were horrified by what Jerry had done with their work and refused to sell him the rights. As a result, the movie was never completed. To this day there is only one known copy of the movie on videotape, and Jerry keeps it locked in a vault in his office. He usually will not discuss it, though in interviews he's said that if he could get the rights and do some exterior shots, he could complete the film and release it, but I doubt that will ever happen.

I got the script on eBay with the intention of shooting it as written, but with puppets instead of people. I thought a puppet would be less frightening than Jerry, but if he can't get the rights, I doubt I can. Two movies have been released that were supposedly based on the idea, *Life is Beautiful*, in which a funny guy gets thrown into a concentration camp and pretends it's all a game to get through the horror, and *Jakob the Liar*, with Robin Williams as a Jew in a ghetto who lies to get his friends' hopes up under Nazi repression, the high concept: *Good Morning, Vietnam* meets *Schindler's List*! If there was justice in this world then the guys from *MST3K* would get a chance to skewer *Clown* on their DVD-only show, *Cinematic Titanic*.

# The Dickstein Chronicles

ASKED WHAT KIND OF WRITING IS THE MOST PROFITABLE, H.N. SWANSON, LITERARY AGENT, SAID, "RANSOM NOTES."

IF YOU READ MY LAST ISSUE, THEN JOHN DICKSTEIN needs no introduction. If you are new to *NegCap*, let me give you a little background. When I was in college, I was friends with a group of guys from Brooklyn who had known each other since middle school. I am still friends with all of them, but Dickstein has been disowned by everyone else for his scary and dangerous behavior. For a while in the 90s, he was really convinced that he was the second coming of Jesus before he went really crazy and embarked on a cross-country journey of hitchhiking, drugs, shitty jobs and fat chicks. He e-mails me regularly, and I have always felt that he had some storytelling talent but was too fucked up to accomplish anything.

Instead of letting his insane, obnoxious, racist ramblings dissolve into the ether, I chronicle them in the pages of this zine. I have asked him many times to sit down and write something coherent, but that's like asking a chicken to ride a unicycle: It's just outside of his abilities.

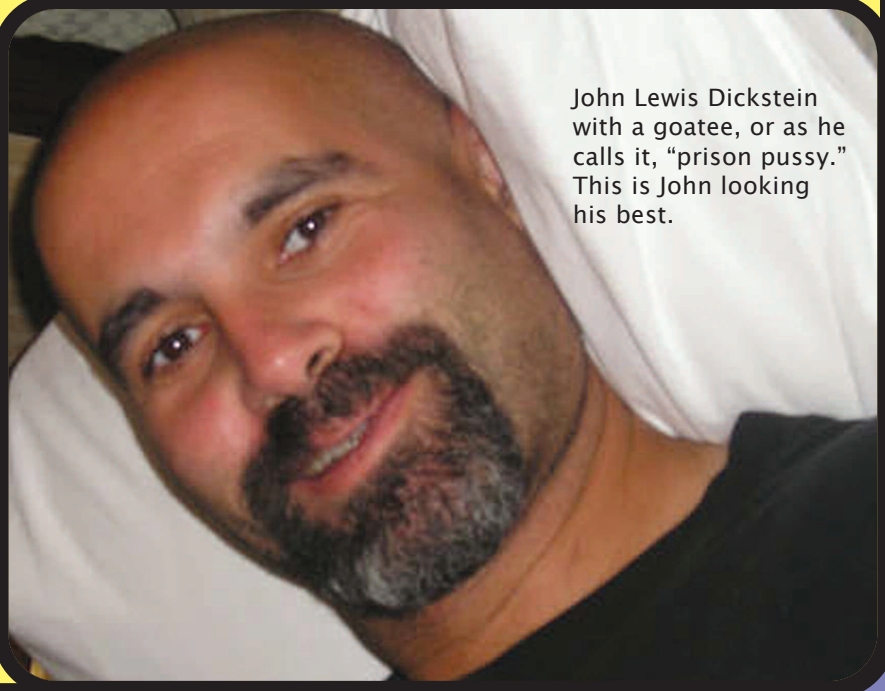
Until very recently, I was still talking to John Dickstein and the issue is pretty simple. He is a crazy asshole with a metaphorical flamethrower, and I tolerated him as long as he pointed his weapon away from me. When he started pointing it at me, I decided that I had enough. He started posting to online message boards that I was the head of NAMBLA, when everyone knows that John Lewis Dickstein has always been the head of NAMBLA (enjoy googling that, pal). He also posted that I was a convicted criminal and that in college I had once slept with a girl who was a little less than attractive. He didn't tell me about these postings; they started coming up regularly when I was googling myself in the shower. I don't mind if he wants to play games like that because I say worse shit about myself on my own site, but it would be pretty awful if a potential friend, client or movie date were to read these things about me, especially when they aren't true. At the same time he disparages me and besmirches my reputation, John has spent the last twenty years fucking women with all manner of mental issues, from autism all the way up to full-on mental retardation. When you have no standards, it's easy to find new sexual partners. I've been off the market since 1994, while John was spending many of his drunken nights playing piggly-wiggly with half-wits at a truck stop in Laramie, Wyoming.

He has given me written permission to print his letters and to edit them as I see fit. It's not like his life story is going to stop a greasy spoon in Montana from hiring him as a line cook. John briefly had a cell phone that shoots crappy videos and he sent me a video every day for a few weeks, clogging up my inbox and generally irritating me because he usually shot in film-negative mode, so the colors were reversed and it was impossible to tell what was going on. I had just gotten a cell phone that could get e-mail, and there is nothing worse than paying by the byte to have your inbox clogged with bullshit. Believe me, if the content of the videos had been even halfway decent, I would've gladly posted them all to YouTube and then embedded them in this story, but as it worked out, everything he sent was just useless and annoying, not unlike the man himself.

Some of John's old friends have found him through my web site and contacted me asking for his whereabouts. He briefly dated a girl that lives in Scotland and from what he said, it sounded like she actually cared about him. Of course, he fucked it all up like he always does. The upside is that he converted her into a fan of *NegCap* and I will take readers wherever I can find them. Whenever he would disappear for long periods of time, the Scottish Chick [hereafter referred to as SC] would contact me to ask if I had heard from him. She incorrectly assumed that I had any idea where John was. He just sent me e-mails from wherever he was, telling me what he was up to, and then would disappear again for months at a time. Eventually I told her that if she was hoping to have a long-term relationship with him that it was probably impossible. He had told me as much (as you'll read) and she was grateful for my honesty.

My original request to John was for him to write about his experiences in love, since this was always intended to be my "nice" issue. We'll have to see how well that bullshit construct holds up. Previous issues have usually been about 70 percent hate and anger, tempered by 30 percent sweetness and light. Hopefully that balance should be reversed this time. Here comes a good chunk of hate and anger, but it shouldn't count against me because I didn't write it. Before we get to John's brief tale of love, I thought it would be nice to go back in time and revisit some of John's older letters so my readers can see the devolution of John Lewis Dickstein. As always, I have corrected John's horrible spelling and grammar as well as removing any material that might get either of us investigated by Homeland Security, but I am always very careful to maintain the internal consistency of what he is saying. In other words, I take his rambling bullshit and craft it into a coherent, linear narrative.

My wife and I moved from San Francisco to NY right after 9/11 and lived with my mom until we had saved up enough money to buy an apartment in Manhattan. I contacted John to see what he was up to, and the first e-mail is his reply. Also note that most of these e-mail addresses are dead, but dickstein@negcap.com will usually forward to him if I can keep up with him. Just because I am not talking to him doesn't mean *you* can't waste *your* time.



John Lewis Dickstein with a goatee, or as he calls it, "prison pussy." This is John looking his best.

# Our Love Was a Living Thing and I Killed It

BY JOHN LEWIS DICKSTEIN

From: AdabesiPoet@cs.com [I googled this name and it's a reference to a character on HBO's *Oz*, similar to his later "ozonhbo" e-mail address.]
Date: November 21, 2001 4:44:00 PM EST
To: josh@negcap.com
Subject: Don't Ask, Don't Tell [I didn't get this reference until the next message, a few days later]

Hey Josh,

I'm back in Florida, doing a lot of TV watching and growing fat. After leaving Minneapolis, I hopped the Greyhound to Boulder, scored some good pot, went to Austin, smoked it, then came back here. I haven't fucked since that chick I met on the Amtrak going to Seattle. It's still boring as hell down here. I hope everything is going okay back in New York. I plan on sitting home and watching football for Thanksgiving.

I've seen enough of my family already. The hard-core traveling was interesting, but I'm not 25 anymore and probably shouldn't be living like that. Please write soon.

Dickstein

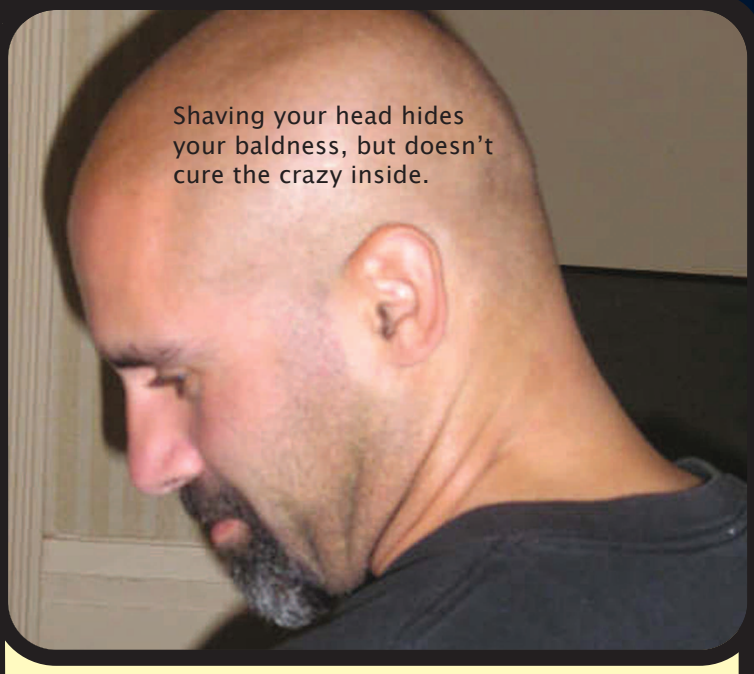
From: genpop@aol.com [It took me two years before I figured out what his e-mail address meant, maybe it took you a few seconds. I'll put it at the end of his letter so you can guess what genpop means for yourself.]
Date: December 1, 2001 8:08:17 PM EST
Subject: Blow the Man Down

Hey Josh,

This might seem shocking, but I've enlisted in the Navy. I cleaned my system out and luckily I've never had any legal issues. [At this point, I didn't believe him at all. He is sometimes a liar and after 9/11 I couldn't believe that any sane person would volunteer for the military knowing full well that we were going to attack someone but, again, John doesn't conform to the rules of the sane, which is very convenient for him.] Believe it or not, it's very hard to join the military [I believe that having a pulse and no criminal record is all you need, not much else.] The days of the judge telling people, "The service or jail" are long over. I'll be going to Chicago in the middle of January for boot camp, then fourteen weeks of medical training. It's a five-year commitment, but after looking back on the past five years, I haven't really done much except fuck around. I've always wanted to travel beyond North America, I figure letting your tax dollars pay for it will work. [It almost seems like John is doing this because it somehow screws me, always mentioning my "tax dollars." I prefer to think my tax dollars are only used for hemp subsidies, but that's my issue.]

I'll be a licensed nurse after training (Nurse Dickstein). The boot camp shouldn't be that bad; I'm a good swimmer and it's completely co-ed. I took some punk-ass job at the mall in the meantime, selling sporting goods. It's amazing what they expect of you for $7 an hour.

I finished all of my military processing last week. They issued me a temporary military ID and I have Naval Reserve status. Because of my age and limited college experience, I get to go in at a higher rank. The pay is okay, about $1,400 a month to start, plus room, board, travel and medical covered, plus 30 days vacation per year, on top of the normal leave time. My family has been a lot nicer since I decided to join. My step-dad is an ex-Marine, so I guess he thinks it's cool that he can tell his decrepit cronies that I'm in the military. They'll probably try to brainwash me, mostly through repetition and sleep deprivation; but hey, after what I've been through, I wish them good luck. Anyway, I hope you've been successful in your job search [see "Karoshi: Book 2" on page 32]. The economy sucks balls down here and it's probably not much better where you are. I e-mailed [Chris] Hoffman, but he's probably too busy cleaning up the rubble that used to be his loft to write me back. Oh, well. I sometimes wonder what happened to John Tormey [another friend of ours from college who seemed destined for jail or a drug OD]. I searched for him on the web and the only thing that came up was some middle-aged character actor with the same name. He's probably in prison.


Shaving your head hides your baldness, but doesn't cure the crazy inside.

Good luck with your new issue. If you'd like me to write anything for you I'd be happy to; I could use the practice. I'm not very self-motivated, so if you have a topic, or would like your readers to experience what's in my head, let me know. Write soon.

HM/Seaman—John Lewis Dickstein—USN

*GenPop: I thought it was about the Pop Generation, or people who were into Pop Art and sometimes things are so obvious that you can't see them, no matter how hard you look. It actually refers to the GENeral POPulation in prison, but I have never been to prison, so it's natural that this term would be outside my realm of experience. John is obsessed with HBO's series* Oz.

From: genpop@netscape.net
Date: December 22, 2001 5:07:24 PM EST
Subject: Heeby Christmas and a Happy Jew Year

Hey Josh,

I don't know if you got my last e-mail—this account is new and I'm still working out the kinks. My neighbor threw a Christmas party last night. I got drunk as fuck and played some D-Cup songs on acoustic with

some Filipino guys; we played Beatles songs, too. I was smart enough to leave before the coke arrived. Are you going to Times Square for New Years? [Uh, no, never!] It's been about ten years since I've done that. I miss New York sometimes. I saw a great movie, actually two this week. First, *Gangs of New York*. I went to the noon show on a Friday so I could see it first in an empty theater. It was brutal and long, like my cock. Also, I saw a movie on cable with Harvey Keitel called *Smoke*. It was just real and made me homesick. Again, I hope you and the wife are doing well and write back if you get a chance. This e-mail is spam-free but you know my other ones, too. Have a happy New Year and tell Peter I said, "boo."

Dickstein

*At any moment, I was expecting to hear that the whole Navy thing was a bad joke, but it wasn't.*

From: genpop@aol.com
Date: January 7, 2002 7:44:52 PM EST
Subject: I had a dream, I was in the sea; it was salty.

Hey Josh,

I'm leaving [for the Navy] in a week. I'll probably keep a journal of my boot camp experience. If you'd like, I can send you some excerpts as I go along. Most of the guys I've met are in their teens or early 20s. It should be quite a challenge for my rickety old ass, getting rousted out of bed at 5AM. The past two months have been pretty uneventful. Lots of food and TV watching on the old people's couch. I hope your new year went well.

Best of luck to your wife and Lopez. Write me if you get a chance. I check into the airport motel on Sunday.

Dickstein



*I didn't hear from him again for a while. I assumed that he would finish his training and immediately go to Iraq to be killed by a roadside bomb. Instead, more than six months later, I got this from him:*

From: genpop@excite.com
Date: August 12, 2002 10:43:45 AM EDT
Subject: Stop Drinking at the Sperm Bank

Hey Josh,

I left the Navy after a month. [What? NO!] My old back couldn't take it. I fell on my ass during training. I was busy staring at an 18-year-old's ass instead of watching the icy ground. So basically, they fixed me, paid me and put me on a train back to Chicago. I ended up getting almost two grand of your tax dollars after the smoke cleared. I guess some of it was pain and suffering. Anyway, I ended up spending my first night of freedom in jail. I got drunk on Rush Street with a couple of other guys who were medically discharged. We ended up at Cabrini Green housing projects to buy drugs. The cops saw the dude handing me the shit. Next thing I know, four squads were surrounding us. Luckily, I have no criminal record, so they let me out in the morning on a signature bond and gave me a court date for the following week. My lawyer cut a deal with the state to go to drug school on Saturdays for a month. I met a guy in jail who owned a loft near downtown. He let me stay there until my legal shit went away. I managed to find work cooking at a brewpub during the day. At night I rolled with the guy I was staying with, picking up stuff and cash, it was insane. [Is it just me, or do you suspect that there were a lot of blowjobs and felonies going on between John and his jail "benefactor"?] Finally, when I was free again, I got the fuck out of Illinois and headed out west on the Amtrak to Seattle, where I am now. Please write soon.

Dickstein

From: ozonhbo@aol.com
Date: October 12, 2002 7:13:00 PM EDT
Subject: My Right Nut and Other Astounding Tales

Hey Josh,

Sorry about my last letter. I tried using the spellcheck and it fucked the whole thing up. I'm back in Florida. I think I have a job with a sports information service. It pays well and will let me use my sports knowledge and laziness to my advantage. I ended up back here because of my nuts. No, really. I had a yeast infection, yeah, poetic justice. [John is referring to the fact that he used to make fun of a girl we knew who once got a yeast infection. He was merciless and incredibly cruel, so it *is* poetic justice that he was eventually sidelined with a yeast infection.] It ended up turning into cellulitis of the scrotum. I spent two weeks in the hospital and they cut me open and had to drain me. I thought I was going to lose my right nut but the urologist kept me whole. I couldn't work for a month and I'm still healing so I had to come back home. I've been giving a lot of thought to writing a screenplay based on some of the shit that went on at Purchase back in the 80s. That nostalgic crap is really popular now. Maybe you and your Master's degree can help. We can both get paid. I turned 35 back in August. I've shaved my head and cut off my goatee. I look like I'm 25. I also lost 20 pounds because of the infection. I'll try to keep it off. My family wasn't very happy about my return, but I was stuck and they understood.

How is everything going back in NY? How's the mag [*NegCap*] going? Have you seen Peter or that rich fuck [Hoffman]? I wonder what would have happened if I finished boot camp. I would probably be pulling Marines out of trenches in Iraq [from the Navy?]. I guess I'll never know. It's 90 degrees here in the land of sun. I didn't think I'd ever be back. Seattle is more my kind of town. The Greyhound trip took five days. It was packed with niggers, guys right out of prison, and single welfare moms thinking the grass is greener. I've stopped smoking pot for now. I can pass a drug test. Upon release from the hospital they gave me a ton of Oxycontin. That shit is no joke. I'm sticking to beer and ibuprofen in the meantime. I hope you're doing well. Please write back when you can.

Dickstein

From: genpop@netscape.net
Date: December 20, 2002 12:08:38 AM EST
Subject: Now I'm physically healed or Lopez is scared because he's Catholic [Actually, Lopez is a lapsed Lutheran, but whatevs.com]

Hey Josh,

Sorry about the long wait. I forgot that I sent you my last e-mail on my mom's Outlook account. She never uses it, so I was busy dumping files and shit and I found your letter. I'm glad things are working out for you in NY. Very few people are as smart as you, and if anyone deserves a break, it's you. Chris had his family and dumb luck on his side. You have real talent and someday everybody will know. I think the surgery and my recovery has made me a fairer and more honest person. I did the telemarketing job for a while, but it got old, so I quit and found a job in advertising. I start on Monday. They're willing to train me and eventually I'll be an account executive (sales guy). The agency is run by other Jews and retired military guys, I think it'll be fine for a day job. As I get older, I realize the value in working 9-5, instead of the vampire bartending hours that I reveled in. I've managed to put over $1,000 in the bank, which is amazing, I haven't drank or smoked pot for almost three months. Getting off those painkillers was a trip, that Oxycontin is no joke. If I feel stressed I just pop a kava kava supplement or take a long walk. I tried taking my mom's Xanax for a while; that shit really sucks and the withdrawal is worse than cigs or opium. It is truly the Bush family drug of choice. As always, I'm very bored in

sunnyland [Florida]. I take public transit everywhere. When I tried to renew my license, the jig was up on all my out-of-state tickets and other violations. They cut my driver's license in half and gave me an ID card. I was one of the Patriot Act's first victims. I still hope things are going well, especially with the wife and the zine. I've only been in love once and she was a sicker, more twisted bitch than anyone we know. Please write soon.

John

*I responded that I wanted him to write extensively about his work experience because I had just started writing "Karoshi" for NegCap #4 and I wanted him to stick to my theme of work. He is terrible about sticking to anything but his sheets, so after six more annoying months of wrangling with him, I got the following e-mail:*

From: genpop@netscape.net
Date: June 13, 2003 6:13:38 PM EDT
Subject: Chris Hoffman Loves Jesus? [John looked up chrishoffman.com and discovered it was the personal site of a Christian. Hoffman is Jewish. Irony ensues. The site is now owned by someone else.]

Hey Josh,

I decided to leave Colorado, it wasn't good for my mental health. After a short stint in Utah, I decided to go up to North Dakota. I'm in a small college town where they have a program that gives you five free weeks in a motel apartment. I've done this twice already in the past five years. It's a good place to relax and regroup. I found a job bartending at a private club. They also want to teach me how to deal blackjack. I'm going to start on the work story. I've had hundreds of jobs in the last twenty years and it's hard to figure out where to begin. I guess I've gotten so used to employers being slave drivers that when I find a decent one it makes me want to stick around. I felt bad about fucking the brewpub in Durango, but the kicker was the fact that I was only getting paid $7.50 an hour and the place was always busy. I guess I was still being taken advantage of, at least financially. I start work at the club tomorrow. They have weddings booked all summer. If it works out I can just work on the weekends and make enough money. My rent is free until July 15. Oh yeah, try going onto www.chrishoffman.com; you'll be redirected to a site called Jesus is Real. I thought it was funny.

I fooled around with a school teacher with dreadlocks the night before I left Colorado. I refused to listen to her bullshit, so I didn't get laid.

SC [The girl I was talking about in the intro who wisely prefers to stay out of this story] hasn't e-mailed me back in about a month. I tried giving her a piece of the truth, which I guess she hated. Anyway, I'm broke again and out of pot. I'll make some cash this weekend and blow it all again. I just want to have a fun summer for a change. I'll be 36 soon.

Maybe I can find two 18 year olds to fuck, then it will all come full circle. Hoffman and I gangbanged some whore from my high school on my 18th birthday. I hope you and the wife are doing well. I've had several chances at marriage and managed to fuck it up or leave. I don't like being alone, yet I hate most people. I'll buy some paper this weekend and start writing.

Dickstein

From: genpop@excite.com
Date: December 15, 2003 5:58:56 PM EST
Subject: RE: I am publishing you

Josh,

Sorry about the long wait. I was in Mexico for a while and did not have access to e-mail. I am in Chicago right now and it is very fucking cold. I'm crashing at some basement shithole in Evanston, across from Northwestern University. I spent thanksgiving in Boulder and caught the flu and its soulmate, pneumonia. I spent three days in the hospital. If I had had a gun, I'd probably be dead. I'm glad to be back in the states and in a real city. Pussy is real mean up here. Maybe it's the cold, the economy or my big, fat, kike cock. Yeah, publishing my letters is a good idea; it won't get any more real than that. You know that I'm a lazy fuck and can never really get anything long down on paper. You should publish Hoffman and his faggot, money-grubbing website. He is George W.'s wet dream. I know if he went to jail he'd get it in the ass from the brothers every night.

Anyway, hope you and the wife are doing well. I quit smoking and drinking. The doc says my blood pressure is through the roof. I can't quit salt or fucking blondes or Red Bull. I guess if I don't make it to forty I'll still be okay. If you still want an article from me, I'll give it my best shot. I would like to expose the hostelling business for what they really are, money-grubbing thieves. Have a nice New Year and I'll talk to you soon.

John Lewis Dickstein

From: genpop@excite.com
Date: Jun 2, 2006, at 1:24 PM EST

Hey Josh,

I just moved back to Minnesota and landed an I.T. job with a travel website. I'm very bored and hooked on Ambien. [Wow, John's addicted to drugs, again. **yawn**] I start work on the 12th so I have ten days to get my shit together. I hope all is well with you and the family. Let me know if you have any story ideas for me; I'd like to do a more ambitious one. Suck my larger cock.

D-Ride

*From: josh@negcap.com*
*Date: Jun 2, 2006, at 2:45 PM EST*
*To: genpop@excite.com*

*Hey Dickstein-*

*I was thinking that the next issue would be the "nice" issue that I have always planned, but I know that won't work for you. Do you think that you can write about love and relationships? The thing is, you have to be really honest. I think people would be fascinated to see your honest approach. Like, what's up with that girl in Scotland? What happened when you fell in love? Why do you only fuck the wagon* now? What went wrong? Where do you want to be in five years? What are you looking for in a girl? If you write it well, maybe you'll get a girlfriend out of it. Believe it or not, me, Chris, Peter, Jay and Mo are finally getting together for a poker game at the end of June. Should be fun. As for Ambien, that shit is just awful. I would try switching to something else, like Klonopin. That shit is awesome. I will write more later, but I am at work now. Is this your new e-mail address???*

*Josh*

From: adabesipoet@yahoo.com
Date: June 4, 2006 4:21:43 PM EDT
Subject: This week in hell…

Hey Josh,

I've tried Klonopin before and just drink on it, have insane blackouts and get in trouble—like jail, fucking the wagon or permanently 86'd from bars I really like. It turns me into the same dude I was 20 years ago, except mean and bitter, not very funny. I know that by itself it's similar to good weed, but cleaner. The only time I ever took it without booze or crumbling it into a joint was my stint in jail in Illinois. The puzzle-head [love that term!] gave it to me so I would stop torturing the guards and other inmates. As a rule I don't generally fuck the wagon, I like the tallest, blondest girl,

*The expression "fuck the wagon" means to have sex with a woman that is heinous, purely out of desperation In fact, Morris DROVE to fuck the wagon. But that's why we love him.

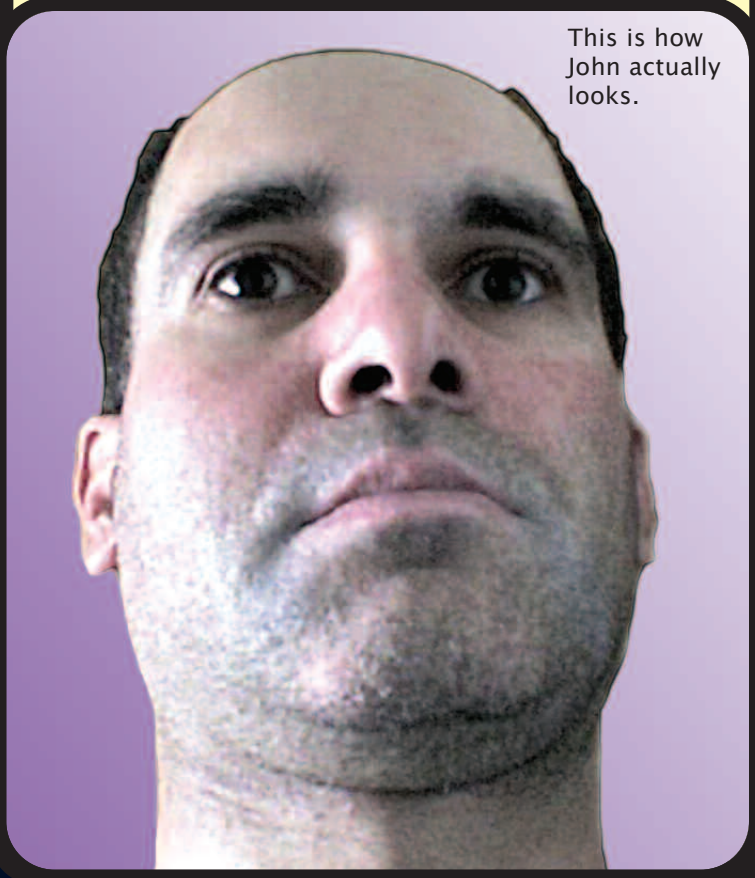
with the milkiest, whitest skin and tits so big, if she stands behind me and heaves them over my shoulders, it looks like I have huge tits. I'm finally off the Ambien now [woohoo!] and had my doctor write me a prescription for Clonadine—blood pressure pills. Mixed with a cup of Kava tea, it helps a bit, but I haven't really slept in two days.

I hooked up with a dusty, overnight, twelve-hour hell shift at an ethanol plant, in the middle of fucking nowhere, through Friday night. They were so desperate for cleaning bitches that they even pay for the two-hour round trip drive time. I'm suffering anyway, so it almost makes sense. My check will be nuts on Saturday, probably 100 hours at $10 an hour plus all of the overtime. I'm moving into a hotel above an Irish Pub and liquor store. It's a great deal, $270 a month including cable and a/c. My chances of staying sober aren't very good. I feel bad about SC and you know I've done enough bad Karma shit to rival Earl [of *My Name is Earl*], but she is looking for something that's forever and it would be unfair because I don't love her and I would only end up hurting her. She's a very cool person, you can say anything to her and she is truly a kind person and very smart; but she's not tall enough and blonde enough and young enough. Her skin is milky white and she has HH tits and is a very good fuck. She loves to drink and party and she'll meet someone else who is better for her. This e-mail is just one of my bullshit ones. I was really fucked up on Ambien and the only one I could remember. I hope you have fun playing poker with the guys and please send my love. I hope your kid is healthy and looks like Juli.

John-Lewis Dickstein

*I really liked SC and I told her that no matter John was telling her, he was no good for anyone in his mental state. I think he was more normal around her but always up for partying, as they say. Whenever he disappeared for a while, she would write to me to ask about him, thinking he was dead. He had bragged to her that I was dying to publish him, which isn't true, but if using my zine gets anyone laid, that's my achievement, I think. I told him that if he wanted to be in another issue, he would have to actually sit down and write something concrete and honest about love.*






On Apr 16, 2007, at 5:03 PM, John Lewis Dickstein wrote:

I quit my shitty job about two months ago, hopped on the Amtrak and went all over the West Coast. I finally arrived out on the Olympic, about an hour west of Seattle. I've been staying at a youth hostel and started doing work for a local temp agency. Amazing how quickly money disappears when you're traveling! I haven't gotten laid since that college girl on New Year's [I think he said it was in a bus bathroom], but I met a local girl at work who is cute, blonde, nineteen and very friendly. She said that she would be into sharing a bottle of wine one night. Maybe that will be my night. I applied for food stamps for the first time in about ten years and it really helps. They had a sign in the welfare office lobby that if you have unprotected sex they offer the morning after pill for free right there. Hopefully, I can fuck her and then take her down there the next morning after I've ejaculated inside her several times... fun, fun.

I hope that everything is going well with you and your family. I started smoking pot again a few months ago, but have quit again. It really doesn't help with stress or sleep. It seems to suck out any creative drive and make me depressed when I'm not high. I think I'll just go back to being an old wino who charms college chicks. I'm at work now and it's very slow here. My job is to take incoming calls for medical and tech companies after hours. It's very easy and I'll switch to overnights, after training, which I prefer. My balls are killing me after talking and sitting next to that chick today. She just left. Maybe I'll take a break now and jerk off.

*Date: April 18, 2007 4:20:27 PM EDT*
*To: melovehugetits@gmail.com*

*John-*

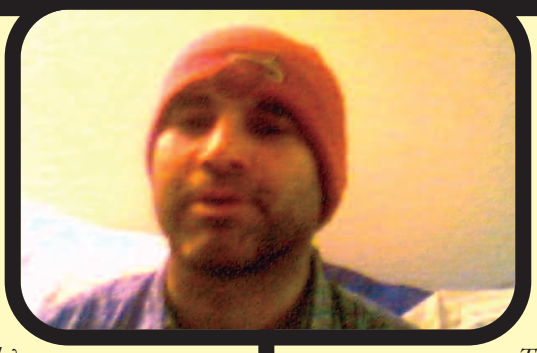
*Still, very fascinating, but once again, you can't even stay on topic at all. Are you capable of writing on a particular subject or have the drugs wrecked your brain to the point where you can't even understand what I am saying? I am glad you are getting laid with live women for a change, but that doesn't change the fact that I want you to write about love... have you ever been in it, do you want it now, what does it mean to you... unless you really want to do "The Only Good Job is a Blowjob" part two and just keep on rambling about crappy jobs, hitchhiking and fat chicks. That is your life now, after all.*

*Love,*
*Everyone*

From: John Lewis <melovehugetits@gmail.com>
Date: Apr 19, 2007, at 2:29:41 PM EDT

I'll write about whatever the fuck you want; it's your nickel. [WTF? I am not paying for this nonsense, dickshit!] It might take more time than quoted. What's your final deadline for production? [Uh, eventually?] I'll forward you some letters, if you want, that I've been sending back and forth to a girl I met on MySpace, if you will promise that you won't contact her or fuck with her. She has enough problems. [John being one of the biggest and most life-threatening.] I've only been in love once and it was shit. It was back in '96-'97. We lived together in Minneapolis. I got her pregnant and would have married her. She was so fucking hot that if you saw her you would drop your pants and start jerking off. [No, I wouldn't do that for anyone.] After I dumped her, she married a partner in a big law firm and had two kids. Jeni was in college and decided on her own to abort the baby. Just like what happened with [REDACTED] and Kermit. Except I wasn't enough of a romantic idiot to stay with her. You know I have the talent to write about anything. I'm just lazy and sophomoric.

Love,
Spy vs. Spy



*Date: April 19, 2007 3:21:15 PM EDT*
*To: melovehugetits@gmail.com*

*John-*

*That sounds about right. I really want to hear about this love story because I think it will make you seem more human and less annoying. I don't know what you mean about [REDACTED] and Kermit, though. Does it bother you that your spawn was aborted? Or that she married some other dude? How did you meet? Was that the only time you were in love? That's what I want to know. I would like the new issue to come out next year and I am still writing, so you should start working on it right now. Send me whatever you have when you have it and I'll find a way to make it work.*

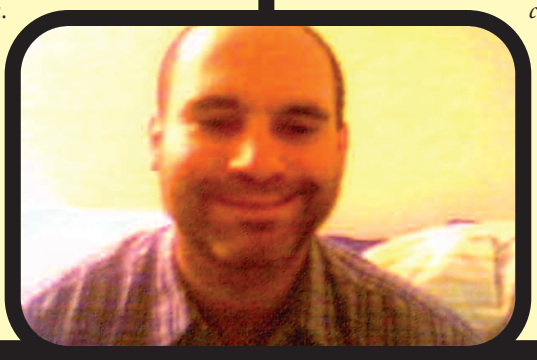
From: melovehugetits@gmail.com
Date: April 19, 2007 5:35:15 PM EDT

Yeah, I forgot that first semester at Purchase, we weren't that tight. [REDACTED] was dating this chick named [REDACTED] who was an uptight blonde bitch with no tits; just the way he likes it. Anyway, she was still seeing her high school boyfriend on the side and she got pregnant. She wasn't sure who the father was, but probably [REDACTED]. He was fucking her every day for months. She went home one weekend and had an abortion. He'd fuck her in the room right in front of me and she would made these loud, high-pitched noises that sounded like a dying frog—Kermit noises. I think the night before Peter and I left Jen the JAP's room and wrote our jism graffiti on the walls, we gave her that nickname. [Jen the JAP comes up sometimes and she was an insanely hot, but very JAPpy girl who was my only one-night stand. The jism graffiti was something that he and Peter did on her wall but I was not a part of that particular adventure.] Last year, [REDACTED] asked if I could track Kermit down because I'm good at that and I couldn't find her anywhere. She must have married a cop or a lawyer.

I've only been in love once. She hooked up with a lawyer on the rebound from me. She wanted to marry me, she just didn't want a kid at twenty-three. I was drunk all the time and hopping from job to job; so now I get it. If I would have been more stable, she would have had the baby. She was a much better person than any of us, from a rich family and the oldest child. You're the oldest child, but you're a piece of shit. [Actually, I'm a classic middle child, but don't let the facts get in the way of Dickstein's logic.] I'm not much better. She was incredibly beautiful, dark blonde hair, big blue eyes, like a baby, and an ass that wouldn't quit. She only dated rich morons before me, so I had to teach her how to suck my cock, but she was a fast learner. The terroristic skills that I taught her enabled her to truly marry a millionaire. She loved to fuck. We did it at the movies, on a grassy field and in a back alley on the University of Minnesota campus. She was probably my soulmate. She even liked my vile sense of humor and D-Cup songs [John's band in college was D-Cup and the Blue Balls, famous for the hit, "(She Didn't Like It So) Fuck Her!"] She grew up in a huge house out in the nice suburbs of Minneapolis and went to high school in Europe; she had never heard shit like that before. Like most women who are truly beautiful, men would go out of their way to only tell her nice things. When we met in an uptown Minneapolis coffee shop, I had a mohawk like DeNiro in *Taxi Driver*, wearing a motorcycle jacket and a bicycle chain with a Master lock around my neck and 18-hole, steel-toe Docs. To her, I was from outer space. She gave me the keys to her new car, we drove out to Lake Calhoun and had sex for hours. We both came over and over again like a Pushkin poem.

Now you understand why I'm still single and usually very picky. I liked SC, but it didn't have much to do with the way she looked. She is like a dude with HH tits. You think that I only get with fat chicks or the Lizard Lady [don't ask], but you forget that you haven't seen me in fifteen years. I'm taking Viagra not because I can't get hard, but to stay awake. It also works for that. [If you say so...] My love story is just a one girl story. I don't know how much more I can tell you, it's been ten years. In a way you're right about the drugs and booze but it's not really that. I did my best after I left her to try to stuff my emotions and memories of her, it hurt that much. She may have killed our baby, but I think I did much worse. Our love was a living thing and I killed it because I didn't understand or know how to handle it. We could have had a lot more babies. The thought of her fucking that control-freak ambulance-chaser still makes me want to puke. I did this to myself, so I guess, again, I'll let it go. You're a fucking asshole for making me rehash all of this. I fucking hate you.

Daddy



*I finally got John to be honest about love for a minute after more than twenty years knowing each other and believe me, it was not easy. The fact that he reacted so angrily to these memories being recalled means that on some level, he has regrets about the way he fucked up so much of his life. I was just relieved to get a story out of him that was usable, instead of the insane ramblings and accusations that he normally sent me. That was enough of the story for me to call it a day. Some people have said that Dickstein is not a real person: He's either a character that I created or he is based on a real person but that I am doing all the writing. That's complete bullshit and if you don't believe me, please contact him yourself and confirm the story's veracity on your own. In case anyone really wants to date Dickstein, he's still single and on Facebook he's "Charlie Agon," or Charles W. Agon, a Chuck Wagon reference. All of his points of reference are twenty years too late to be relevant, but that never seems to stop him from making them. Go ahead and friend him. He's a lot of fun.*

# ARE YOU HOMOPHOBIC?

**1 How do you eat a banana?**
a) I peel the skin back like a foreskin and I push the back of my head down over the entire length of the banana. Once I feel it hit my gag reflex, I push a little farther and break off a small piece of the banana using only my firm tongue.
b) I carve the banana into small shapes, like vaginas and boobs, then I gently chew on them.
c) I shove the whole banana in my pie-hole and then I suck on it gently until it dissolves in my mouth.
d) I don't eat bananas. I won't have any fruit in my mouth, ever.

**2 How do you feel about gay marriage?**
a) Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve, faggot.
b) Why should I be the only one to suffer and lose half my money to some harpy? Let the dykes have a taste of that!
c) Every time a gay person gets married, an angel gets a big, painful hemorrhoid and that's not very angelic.
d) I'm too busy sucking cock to answer that question.

**3 How do you feel about gay adoption?**
a) I can barely tolerate my own kids, much less some gay kids.
b) If you have two gay parents, it means you will definitely turn out gay. I know this doesn't explain all the gays whose parents are straight, but let's not let facts cloud my argument.
c) Brangelina's gay!?!?!?
d) As long as they stay quiet in the movies, I don't care who has kids. They can't be worse than mine.

**4 Do you eat hot dogs?**
a) I prefer blood sausage, but I'll scarf a dog, yes, I will.
b) Only if it's chopped up in hot dog fried rice.
c) I only eat the fake ones.
d) Yes, smothered in mayonnaise with meatballs stuck in the bun.

**5 How do you feel about wrestling?**
a) I popped a rod as soon as you mentioned it.
b) It's fake, and I only watch real things, like reality TV. I have no idea what irony is.
c) I always enjoy Greco-Roman wrestling, but that bullshit on TV is an insult to the history of wrestling.
d) I will watch guys in bikini bathing suits do anything to each other—the greasier, the better.

**6 How many dicks have you seen besides your own?**
a) You're a fag for even asking that question.
b) I haven't seen my own since I got fat after I got married.
c) Everyone stares at the other guys' dicks in the locker room, right? Right?!?! RIGHT?!?!?!?!
d) I can look at cocks all day; it's what's attached that I can't look at.

**7 If you could only have one CD with you on a desert island for the rest of time, what would it be?**
a) Erasure, *Abba-esque.*
b) Metallica, *Master of Puppets.*
c) the soundtrack to *Chicago.*
d) *The Very Best of Bette Midler* or *Barbra Streisand.*

**8 Let's say you need to use a public bathroom. You enter the men's room and there are three urinals: A, B and C. There's someone at A. What do you do?**
a) I immediately skip like a girl to a stall where I sit down to pee.
b) I go up behind Mr. A and I rub my Mr. C against his hot little ass.
c) I quietly walk to urinal C, stare straight ahead and say absolutely nothing to anyone.
d) I go to B and try to sneak a peek at the other dude's cock.

**9 Using the previous question as an example, if you enter the bathroom and find that there are already men at urinals A and C, you should:**
a) Get down on your knees between both gentlemen and invite them to urinate into your open mouth.
b) Go to urinal B without saying a word, grab the other two penises and shift them like you are driving a Bobcat.
c) Immediately go into an empty stall and jerk off while watching the other guys pee.
d) Go into the ladies room and pee on the floor.

**10 How many times in your life have you seen a Cirque du Soleil show?**
a) What's that, faggot? Cirque du so Gay!
b) Just once: I won tickets in a lumberjack contest and my *Playboy* Playmate girlfriend said she wanted to blow me during the show.
c) More than twenty. And I swallow.
d) I am at one right now, lover.

**11 What do you usually wear on your feet?**
a) Flip-flops so you can see my pedi.
b) Mandals, so you can see my pedi.
c) Barefoot, so you can see my pedi.
d) I only wear steel-toed workboots, you fruit cup.

**12 What is your favorite movie?**
a) *Beaches.*
b) *Wet Hot Bitches 3.*
c) *The Unbearable Lightness of Being.*
d) *Cock Frenzy 9.*

**13 What do you most often masturbate to?**
a) *Juggs.*
b) Restoration Hardware catalog.
c) Internet porn (mostly scat and incest).
d) A Polaroid of your mother's pussy that I just took.

For the correct answers, just look into your heart. If you got any of these simple questions wrong, you are probably gay, or at least bi. There is nothing wrong with that and I wish you well, *zei gazint*, as the Yids say, which means, "be well."

# MENAGE À MINI-RANT™



*In my attempt to elevate angry ranting to a true art form deserving of respect, like haiku or Facebook status updates, I present the following Mini-Rants™ by my wife, our close friend Natasha, and for the first time ever, some of my very own. All of these rants are direct quotes and when you read them, it's best to shout them out loud at anyone nearby for the most impact.*

Some guy on TV said "phony baloney" and my wife immediately started yelling back at the guy, "Any guy who says 'phony baloney' [in bed] is kicked right out of bed. That is sooo not sexy."

On comparative religion: "So, basically the Catholic Church is about corpse worship and Judaism is about how people always oppressed the Jews? Who was it, the Pharoahs? (*in a mocking voice*) 'O, Woe is me!'"

While browsing the television guide for an upcoming episode of *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, my wife saw that the credits said, "Guests include pugilist Mike Tyson." My wife said, 'What is a pug-a-list?" I said, "It's pronounced pyooj-uh-list and it means 'boxer' or 'fighter,'" My wife screamed, "That's a stupid word to use. Nobody knows what that is. People who watch Jimmy Kimmel definitely don't know what that is. *Mike Tyson* doesn't even know what that is. If I don't know what that is there is no way Tyson knows. Why don't they just say 'boxer'? Assholes!"

"I'm not very outgoing, I'm a shy person, but if I was man you better fucking believe that I would get my game on every night to get a girl. It's a matter of survival and if you don't do it, you're gonna have a miserable fuckin' life not getting laid, so fuck you."

Upon hearing that while being interviewed for *Inside the Actor's Studio*, Kiefer Sutherland said his favorite word is "Latin—*gravitas*" and his least favorite word is "nigger," my wife yelled, "My favorite word is asshole, so fuck you! I love calling women 'assholes.'" No, I did not try to point out that Kiefer is not a woman. You try it.

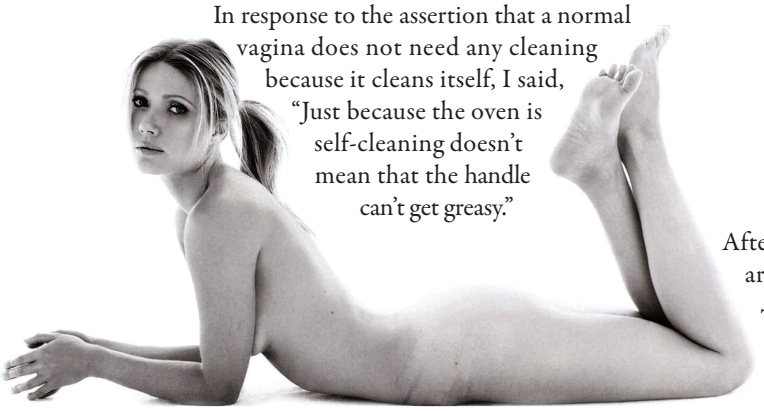
My wife, talking about her relationships at work: "[My boss] Brian is always telling me, 'Take this one, that one, under your wing.' You know what? My wings are full. I don't have the energy. I've got my peeps, I've developed them. They do what I say."

A letter was written to *Savage Love* (a sex advice column) by a woman who said that she had genital herpes but still wanted to get oral sex. Her boyfriend wouldn't go down on her and she was asking if she was doomed to never get oral sex again. My wife yelled, "I wouldn't eat your herpetic pussy either! (*In a mocking voice*) 'What are you supposed to do if you have herpes? Never get oral sex again?' No, you go find somebody new and have him eat your pussy when you don't have an outbreak if you believe that you're not contagious. Problem solved. I'm a problem solver." Then she paused for a moment to process the whole idea. "You really think a dental dam will protect you? I'm not putting *my* mouth *down there*!"

While watching hookers at the Bunny Ranch on HBO's series *Cathouse*, "I don't like the bleached out whores that look all slutty. They look like they've just been fucked. That's like ordering dinner in a restaurant and getting a half-eaten sandwich. I don't want a half-eaten sandwich, ***I WANT MY OWN SANDWICH***!"

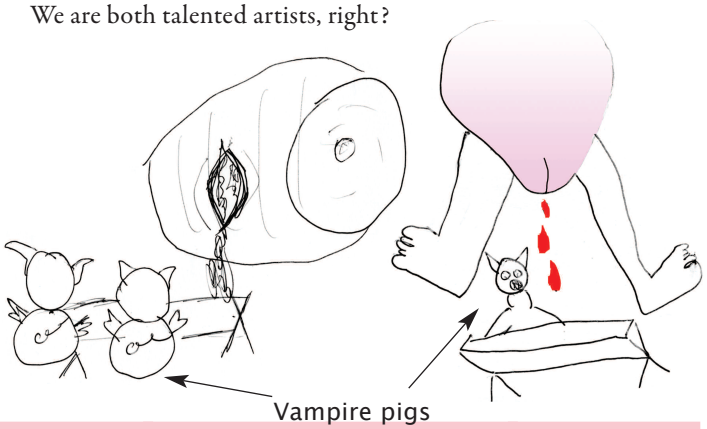
After reading a magazine article about a new trend called the cuddle party: "A cuddle party? What the fuck is that? You go to some loser's apartment and hug strangers? That so skeeves me out. I can't think of anything worse than being in some hippie's apartment and having strangers hug me on the floor. Fuck that." (Check it out for yourself, but please don't go, www.cuddleparty.com.)

On the proliferation of 100-calorie, single-serving snack packs: "You know the problem with that shit? You fuckin' have to eat like two or three of those little fuckers just to get a decent serving!"



In response to the assertion that a normal vagina does not need any cleaning because it cleans itself, I said, "Just because the oven is self-cleaning doesn't mean that the handle can't get greasy."

After watching a woman complain that she can't find any "quality" men, I screamed, "Why don't you go rub ham on your slit and let your dog eat your pussy!!!" This led to a conversation where I said that in my mind, the vagina of the woman in question looked like "a wound in the ham," meaning that there was a lot of pink flesh with a neat slit in it. I also discussed the idea of vampire pigs drinking out of a trough that is full of blood and clots that drip from the wound in the ham, like the ham was having its period. I know, I am mentally ill. Later, after we had talked, I asked my wife to draw her interpretation of the expression "wound in the ham" and then on the right I drew what I actually meant. We are both talented artists, right?



Vampire pigs

After being shown a video where a woman breastfeeds her two daughters, who are 7 and 5, "If you're old enough to ask for it, you're too old to have it!"

Tash ranting about actress Gwyneth Paltrow: "She's a snotty whore bitch. I don't see how anyone could like her, I mean, I really don't."

I WROTE A LONG STORY IN *NEGCAP #4* CALLED "DEAD TO ME" wherein I explained how I take the expression almost literally. I had a list of people whose transgressions had caused their premature metaphorical deaths, as well as a few people that I have known who simply vanished, so they went missing and are *presumed* dead to me. Quite often when I am writing for the zine, I find myself working on something not because I want to see it published but because I want to see where it takes me mentally. This explains why I always go off on tangents and include as much detail as I can. This also explains why so many things that start out well never see the light of day—I decided to stop working on it because I didn't like where the story was taking me.

The original intent of "Dead to Me" was as simple and straightforward as anything I had done: a desire to present my case for why some people that I know turned out to be huge assholes that I hate. Instead of wishing for them to die, I act like it's already happened. On one level, it's simple wish-fulfillment, and on another level, I finally feel like my side of the argument has now become part of the public record. As I was writing it, I was forced to sift through my feelings about all of these people and situations and I had to live through all the hurt and anguish all over again. Now that the story is finally done, it feels like it's just that, a story. It's absolutely true, but like all good stories, it shouldn't end with a funeral because that's a real downer.



I wrote this follow-up because I wanted to demonstrate my evolution as a person and also because I wanted to kick dirt on the graves of some of the dead. The title comes from my wife's old boss, Chitra, who was born and raised in India. She really loved American culture but could never quite get the hang of some of our expressions. When discussing a financial matter that had been resolved, she would often say "We are beating the horse that has already died." Even though what she says means the same thing, I think it's much funnier her way.

Look at me! I am on paragraph four and I'm ready to start the actual story. This must be a record. In the original piece I started with the story of my fellow zine publisher Marc Parker and how I befriended him, trusted him, sent him free, expensive asthma medications (he did a zine called *Azmacort* for asthmatics) and was generally a nice guy to him. In return, Marc repeatedly violated my trust, lied to me, used false personae to elicit comments from me about mutual friends and was a total scumbag to me. He actually printed in the pages of his own zine that he was "dead to me," which I found both hilarious and flattering. It made me feel like I was famous for a second and the fact that he really knew that I hated his fucking guts was awesome. I had explicitly told him in an e-mail that he was dead to me. The reason he felt compelled to mention it was that in the same issue of *Azmacort* with the mention of his being dead, he had paid me many compliments for my kindness and generosity. Since our falling out had occurred between printings, later editions (like the copy that was sent anonymously from Marc's home town) contained the note about his death.

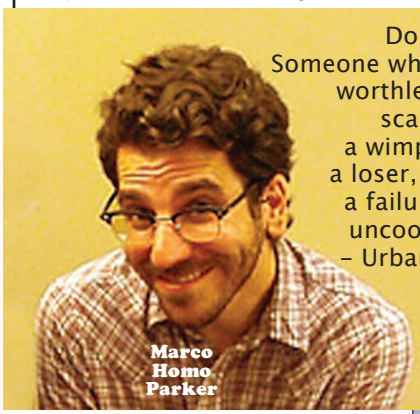
Since that printing, Marc has admitted that he was the phony "Ben Joseph" who had sent me chapbooks in that name in trade for my zine. So, to give you an idea of what a fucking douchenozzle this guy is, he pretended to be a guy named Ben Joseph to trade with me and convince me that he was a real person, all so that he could get me to talk shit about people, which I am happy to do anyway. That motherfucker is still dead and will probably stay dead forever. Maybe if he sent me a sincere apology, explained how he was an immature little twat and that I deserved much better treatment from him, I might piss on him if he was on fire, but then again, I might not. He must have been flattered by my attention because he linked to my story about him from his web site, but I'll just keep moving the page around so his link doesn't work.

It is some comfort to know that Marc is a loser living in Portland, still doing shitty zines about his stupid life in a half-assed way. He publishes his home address online so if you are looking for a stranger to punch...

After Marc, I wrote about a girlfriend that I had in college who was a gorgeous bitch named Adrienne. She cheated on me with a retarded wigger and when I found out, she was dead to me. I rarely saw her after we broke up and that may be because I made it very clear in my circle of friends that she was dead to me and I have to assume that anyone who had been thinking about making a move on her gave up those plans. I would say that in a general sense, I was a much more overtly vicious person when I was in college. I can now relegate my viciousness to these pages and the occasional message board, which has made me much happier, and, consequently, with less of a pressing need to vent. I now find that I usually choose to avoid conflict when possible because other people always get hurt. People have always told me that I am good verbal fighter but that I don't fight fair. The only people who fight fair are people who lose, and that's not me. If you want to win fights, you have to use everything at your disposal. Damn, paragraph seven and I'm already off on a tangent.

A few months after our break-up, I moved to Manhattan, Adrienne transferred out to another college and that was the end of it. In 2006, I was reading an article about the movie *V for Vendetta* and there was a story about how the cinematographer had a fatal heart attack after the movie wrapped and I actually knew his name. He was the same guy who had done classics like *Aliens*, *The Princess Bride*, *Willow* and *Thelma and Louise*, and I was actually sad for a minute. Normally when showbiz types die, I don't give a shit. Even those actors whose work I enjoy don't move me in death, except Fred MacMurray, maybe. But when this guy died, I thought the world had lost someone who was a real talent. He also had the same name as my ex-girlfriend, which reminded me of her.

I found someone who sounded like her on MySpace but the picture was of a dog and her profile said she was bi. I sent her an e-mail and asked her if she had gone to my college when I was there. She wrote back a few minutes later saying that yes, she did go to my school back then and that she knew exactly who I was. From there, we started talking again. I told her that I had written unflattering things about her and if she wanted to respond to them, I would listen. She read what I wrote and had no comment about any of it. She admits that at the time she was using sex to get love but she had never been faithful to anyone. It made me realize that she wasn't disrespecting me just to make me look like an asshole, she was just needy and fucked guys that she liked




Douchenozzle:
Someone who is entirely worthless, useless, scared, a wuss, a wimp, a douche, a loser, a dumbass, a failure, pathetic, uncool, and lame.
– Urban Dictionary

# Beating The Horse That Has Already Died

who paid attention to her. I was just one of many guys in that line but I had been at the head of the line for so long that I guess I hadn't noticed the group of guys gathering behind me, waiting for their shot.

The best thing she told me was that when she had first arrived at my college she had evaluated all of the guys and decided that the two hottest guys on campus were me and this flaming douche named Christian Hand. I won't even bother to disparage him further than that, but his name always made me think of a hired assassin for the Church.

She said that she only had sex with him once, it was one of the worst experiences of her life and, afterwards, she didn't talk to him for years. The worst thing she said to me was the following stream of invective, and let me quote to get it just right: "Yeah, you were a prick back then. Arrogant, cold, cruel, elitist, obnoxious and at times, downright vicious. You elicited a gang mentality in those around you, and you and your crew would gang up to humiliate and torture those you deemed unworthy. Although I deserved your wrath, the 'let's rally behind Jøsh to hate Adrienne' was a bit over the top and just another example of your disdain and cruelty to others. But I'm a pretty tough broad, so despite my astute observation, I hold no real judgment upon you. ;)"

You can't argue with the truth, unless you're a Republican. So why would I bother trying to find her, talk to her, maybe even do the unthinkable, bring her back to life? She put it best on one of the four comments on my defunct MySpace page: "If you and I are talking, albeit briefly and without any real depth, do I still qualify as being dead to you?" Zinged with my own zinger! I was instantly reminded of all the things I used to like about Adrienne and suddenly, she had returned to life. We talked casually about everything: work, relationships and what we had done with our lives. I had assumed that she dropped out because of the trauma of our break-up but it turns out that after our break-up she was kicked out of school for bad grades. I had nothing to do with it, but I can bask in the schadenfreude, can't I?

We traded e-mails for a few weeks and then she asked me for my AIM name. The conversations online were more immediate, but more fleeting. She was just as funny and sharp as I remembered, and just as opinionated. The fact that she was in a relationship with another chick made me feel like it was totally harmless for both of us. We strongly disagree on so many things (she hates Macs and wanted to remake the classic film *Near Dark*, just as examples) that it's wiser to stick to other topics, but I like her and think she is a good person. She is also no longer the raging slut that she was and I am no longer the leader of a pack of droogs hunting for a bit of the old psychological ultraviolence.

In June of 2006 my wife and I went to LA to see my sister's new baby, attend my mom's 60th birthday party, visit my in-laws and catch up with old friends. Before we left, I made plans to meet up with Adrienne as well as my first high school girlfriend.

A few weeks before the trip, Adrienne kindly offered me VIP tickets to Universal Studios, including special passes that let you cut the lines on the rides. She also said that her office was on the lot so we could get lunch together. To make a long, convoluted story short, we never got together. I was very disappointed, not only because I had made a huge effort to get together, but more because she hadn't made a similar effort. At the time, she was going through a very rough period because she had a huge project that had been in the works for years, it was about to get the green light, and the week we rolled into town the whole thing turned to shit and will never get made now. To me, work is always secondary to my life—it's just a means to an end, not an end undo itself. However, truly successful people sacrifice an awful lot to make it, and Adrienne is nothing if not successful.

After we came home, I told Adrienne that I was pissed at her for not making the same effort but since we're both more mature now, we were able to work it out without anyone dying. I don't want to give the impression that I am needy or insecure because I am not. I just don't like when I make plans and people flake on me—I will never chase anyone to be my friend. As my favorite HBO hooker once shouted to a John as she dismissed his sexual advances, "Your dick ain't special!"

I am sure that sooner or later I will see Adrienne again and we'll talk about our lives like old friends, which, I guess, we are now. I like her, I wish her well, and talking to her has made me feel absolved of any hurt that I caused because I did apologize and I did mean it. She has also called herself the c-word on a few occasions and admits to cheating, but she was a kid, too, and everyone has their issues. In addition, I really was a mean, vicious person back then and there are a few other people who are probably entitled to an apology from me as well, but fuck them. If they find me, they can ask, but I am not going to look for them. I get enough agita day-to-day, bro.

I spent a few paragraphs talking about an ex-friend who I will just refer to as "A." She wasn't a bad person, in fact, she was a very caring person. Her problem was that she didn't respect boundaries. She was very sexual and often tried to seduce me with almost no success. After I met my wife, A. tried to seduce us both, after previously complaining about how a mutual ex-friend had given her herpes. I had made a short film about this same herpes-laden mutual friend that mocked him. This guy also made me the star of his student film, which I spent weeks on, but to this day have



illustration by Kurt Marquart

***I didn't attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it. - Mark Twain***

never seen. Let's call this guy Cocksucker McDouchebreath, or Cocky, as we called him. So Cocky gave A. herpes and also had a fling with Adrienne (wait, there's still more) but he was polite enough to warn her about the herpes because he was madly in love with her. Cocky was one of those insanely arrogant film students that thought he was Quentin Tarantino. Unfortunately for him, the reality was that he was QT when QT worked as a video store clerk. Unless Cocky gives me a DVD of my performance in his student film (a pre-cursor to *The Truman Show* where I slowly discover that my entire family life is a terrible sitcom that is going to be canceled) he is fucking dead to me, too.

There is still one more connection but I only heard about it very recently. Adrienne also told me she had a very odd, purely sexual relationship with a guy named Jeff. She said she would go to his room, put on a Cure CD, and fuck. I met Jeff when we filmed Cocky's student film at Jeff's house and it was this same Jeff who helped me shoot the cover for *NegCap #2*, but he is also dead to me because he stole the dolls I was using for the cover art and returned them five years later in very shitty condition. You might think that my school was small based on how incestuous these relationships seem, but there were thousands of people enrolled and I didn't know more than half of them.

A. found me on MySpace a while back and sent me a friendly e-mail. I replied, but two months later, not a word back. During the period I was completing this issue, she found me on Facebook and we were briefly "friends" but then she disappeared again. One of the things that permanently soured the relationship with A. was that she gave me a wrapped gift to store. I put it in my closet and forgot about it. I found out later that it was not a gift, it was a gun that belonged to a mutual friend named Jason. I called him Jason but most people called him Dirt. I was willing to call him Dirt when buying E from him for a few months in the mid-90s. I heard from another guy from college named Eric who said that he was looking for A. and he also told me that Dirt had died of a heroin overdose shortly after I stopped talking to him. I presume he was already a junkie who was dealing to support his own habit, so no need to beat that horse that has already died.

For an update on the Junkie please read my story "Return of the Junkie" (e-mail me for a free PDF). I wrote it as part of this story but decided to axe it out of pity for the poor asshole. He really thinks that I wrote about him to make money off his name when one, this zine makes no money; two, no one would buy this zine just to read that story; three, his story appeared in my first issue so no one knew anything about him or his story at that point. Besides, he was featured in a documentary about addiction called *Union Square* where he actually shoots heroin. I can't imagine that *my words* would do more damage to his reputation than *his actions*.

The next person in my story was a former friend named Jay that I called the "Brooklyn new-wave Romeo." He was never dead to me, he just drifted away from me and all of his other friends. He was supposed to be the best man at my wedding but he blew all of his money on drugs instead and it caused a rift that helped push him away from everyone.

My best friend Peter was very close with Jay and they had also lost touch. While doing some random searching online, I asked Peter if there was anyone that he might want to find. We agreed that Jay would be a good candidate, assuming he was no longer living with his parents. I looked him up and Peter encouraged me to call. When I did, I spoke to a woman who said that not only wasn't Jay there, she wouldn't tell me where he was and hung up on me. I called her back and said I was a very old friend of his, I had found the number online, and if she could just pass on my name and number to Jay, he could call me and I would never bother her again. Three minutes later, Jay called me back.

Turns out his girlfriend has worse credit than Jay (this is astonishing to anyone who knows Jay) so she had him put his name down on her account with the phone company. She worked as a shot girl at the Hustler Club, a high-end strip club in Manhattan. He said that dancers were hot, but the shot girls were the cream of the crop because they didn't have to get naked: Dudes would pay top dollar to drink body shots off them. I asked if they had any job openings for a dude like me but alas, they have a sexist "no balls allowed" policy about the shot girl position. Bastards.

I talked to him for half an hour before I passed the phone to Peter. Afterwards, we were both a little giddy. On the phone, Jay confessed that he never had as much fun as he had hanging out with us and it bummed me out. I mean, I lost a close friend to drugs and apathy, but I still wasn't angry at all. I just wanted to stop wasting time and hang out with him again, just with slightly lowered expectations. He's a fun guy to hang around with, but I wouldn't ask him to babysit my kids or give me a ride to the airport.

Peter called me soon after and said that he had also been talking to Jay a lot and wanted to ask me for a favor. I would do anything for Peter. In the original story, I mentioned Jay's full name and his predilection toward coke in the same sentence, which was one of very few hits his name would get when googled. Jay said that it made him look bad when he was trying to get ahead in life, so I removed it. I tend to abhor any form of censorship of my work to an almost ridiculous degree, but there's a big difference between omitting unnecessary and hurtful words and not saying something you mean for fear of reprisal. Whenever I am writing something for the zine, I am absolutely fearless. This is not because I am some kind of hero, it's because I tend to write by myself in front of the computer in a world of my own creation. I send it out into the world as unfiltered and unfettered as possible and if there's collateral damage, tough titty.

A few weeks later, we had a poker game at my friend Chris's apartment and it was like no time had passed. We were immediate friends again, making inside jokes, playing cards, and catching up. Jay still works in lighting, but now he also has a new band. I heard one of their songs and his singing is actually pretty good. The music didn't really grab me, but it's a genre that I don't generally get into, so it's good for what it is, just not for me.

Since then, we have played poker a few more times, I have spoken to Jay a few times, we exchange e-mails, and we are always trying to get more poker games going. He still hasn't met my kids, but that probably means less to him than it does to me and I am sure on some level, kids freak him out. Of all the people in my circle of friends, I always seemed least likely to marry and have kids and now that we are all pushing forty, it still seems odd that I was the first one married with kids.

I cannot even imagine a scenario where I would speak to Bonaduce ever again. That guy is deader than the dinosaurs to me, but it's funny how often I hear something about him

My friend Jay at a poker game in 2010.



***Paying alimony is like feeding hay to a dead horse — Groucho Marx***

and it's always so awesomely sad. For anyone who didn't read the original story (it's free on negcap.com) Bonaduce hired me to be his right hand man, then later fired me from my job at the *NYPress* because I told a co-worker that he was immature, which then caused some kind of tumult in the office. In my last issue I said that I would never talk about him ever again *unless* he did something stupid, and sure enough, in his final issue of *Crank*, he took yet another undeserved smack at me, which was pretty fucking stupid. Now it's time for some blowback, cocksucker. On the old alt.zines newsgroup (from here on out, I'll call it the "NG"), someone asked Bonaduce if we were still friends and he blatantly lied: "Josh and I were friendly for a bit. [We were close friends from '93 to '98.] Then, apparently, the first issue of his zine came out and I was so jealous of his brilliance that I could no longer be his friend. But, I guess that's what happens when you make the mistake of befriending your fans: they get hurt when you fail to recognize the genius they so desperately believe they possess." The critical fact that he failed to mention is, how, on a few different occasions, he got big freelance writing jobs and then subcontracted the heavy lifting to me.

First, he got a gig with Reactor Clothing and sent me the entire assignment, asking me which parts interested me. I took half of the job off his hands and spent a lot of time writing some really funny stuff. He paid me and used my words, though I am sure he took all the credit and paid me a fraction of what he was paid. Then he got another gig for Killer Loop glasses. I busted my ass to write funny stuff and after I submitted it to him, he lost the gig, so all that work was for nothing.

Later he got a good-paying gig to write a zine-like publication that mixed humor with drink recipes which was to be distributed in bars. He wanted me to work on it but when he told me the client was a cigarette company, I said that I was not a sellout. He replied that he had three stories in consideration at *Details* magazine and bragged that being a sellout paid very well, thank you very much. In fact, here's a direct quote from his e-mail about it, while we were discussing the cigarette job: "On a related note, I've attached the Kamel Kocktail 1st draft. I'm curious as to your opinion of it—have I whored it out too much??" Yes, Bonaduce, you have whored yourself out too much. Odd that you would seek out the opinion of someone you say is not fit to shine your shoes, yet you have no problem turning in my work as your own or using me as a sounding board for new material. Did you normally do that with all of your "fans," as you so derisively called me? I liked your zine when I thought it was true.

Bonaduce, or as you may not know him, Jeff Koyen of suburban New Jersey and the dead zine *Crank*, eventually wormed his way up to the top of the masthead at the *NYPress*. I am sure that on some level it made him feel more vindicated in throwing me overboard, since ditching me was just another step toward the top—in the end, it was probably either him or me. You won, Jeff. I hope that it brings you great joy.

Every year, the *Press* did a list of the most loathsome New Yorkers, which has become a ritualistic attempt on the part of a marginal publication to get some wider media attention, like a baby who shits himself to get mommy to come take a look at the mess. To most people, negative attention is better than no attention. In 2005, Howard Stern placed at #7 on the list because his employer had paid Howard's FCC fines. I've always said that I am huge fan of Howard Stern, so imagine my surprise when I was listening one day and suddenly heard Howard say that he had Jeff Koyen on the phone to talk about the list.

The clip is great because you can actually hear his Bonaduce-esque speech impediment and Jeff gets another richly deserved verbal beatdown. Howard complains that for years he's been given many awards by the *Press*, including Best Radio Personality in New York, but there seems to be an about-face now with the paper lumping him in with total shitbags like Donald Trump and Leona Helmsley. Bonaduce said those previous awards were given by the readers, not the editors, which forces him to admit that the readers must have better taste than the editors do.

Howard then proceeds to tear Jeff limb from limb, verbally. Jeff's position was that since Howard's company paid the FCC fines, Howard has not done enough to advance the cause of free speech and is therefore a pussy. The thing that Jeff doesn't seem to realize is that Howard didn't pay, he didn't want to pay, but radio is a business. The people that own the business that employs Howard were having their new station acquisitions held up, their licenses threatened and were basically being shaken down by the FCC for cash. Rather than leave their company's growth in limbo indefinitely while fighting the case, they capitulated as part of the cost of doing business. It's not much different when a mobster asks you for protection money from your business, but it's never to protect you from others, it's only to protect you from the mobster. So you can be all brave, noble and self-righteous, but it's not going to mean much when your business has been burned to the ground, or when your kids are followed home from school or when you get a dead cat in a bag left on your doorstep.

This is probably not a current picture of Jeff Koyen.

Jeff also slams Howard for his support of Giuliani and Bloomberg. Howard replies that both mayors had a long history of supporting him, his show and his right to speak freely, but Jeff doesn't seem to hear it, calling both men "monsters." Howard correctly reminds Jeff that he is no position to be so high and mighty while a significant portion of his paper is financially supported by paid ads for straight, gay and transsexual prostitutes. Jeff sounds incredulous that anyone could fault him for what he calls "hooker ads," but this is something that I talked about at length in the original "Karoshi" in *NegCap* #4. This spins the conversation out of control until Howard gets so sick of Jeff that he abruptly ends the conversation, tells Jeff to "drop dead," and then calls him "a jerk." I hope you can picture me on the subway with my iPod listening to Howard and laughing my fucking ass off the first time I heard it.

After the call, the entire crew cuts Jeff into little pieces and, I tell you, it's a classic that I think everyone should hear a few times, so look for an MP3 of the call on the web version of this story.

After the call Howard says that the real reason the *Press* wrote negative shit about him was because of his support of Mayors Giuliani and Bloomberg, not because of the FCC. He also noted, as I have, that it was more about getting some attention and publicity for a paper that has been dying on the vine for years. Each issue had fewer and fewer ad pages, and the paper's owner sold it in 2002. It only went downhill from there, averaging 100 pages under Bonaduce to 40 pages an issue in 2007. I remember doing the "Best of New York" issue in 1998, and it was almost 300 pages.

Bonaduce is a haggard old douchebag.

Not long after, Bonaduce got into another strange altercation with his new bosses. My source for this is Bonaduce himself and news reports filed at the time. The *Press* was planning a cover story called "52 Funniest Things About the Upcoming Death of the Pope" while Pope John Paul was hospitalized. It was written by Matt Taibbi, not Bonaduce, but Bonaduce was the editor-in-chief.

I am a devout atheist and regularly goof on religion and its adherents, and as long it's funny, it's cool with me to bash whomever you like. Here's a sample of those 52 things, and honestly, these are the funny ones. Google it if you want to see the whole list; it's out there.

"47. Upon death, Pope's face frozen in sickening smile, eyes wide open, teeth exposed, like a baboon.
46. Beetles eating Pope's dead brains.
45. Pope departs Earth at a time when *Hitch* is top-grossing movie in the world.
39. Can't move. Can't reach penis.
30. Michael Jackson too broke to buy Pope's bones.
20. Hall and Oates mulling comeback. [Yay!]
17. In his last days, the Pope was in tremendous pain. [This one is funny, I'll give them that.]
9. Bush on the tragic event: 'Our thoughts and prayers go out to this great man and all of his many children.'
8. Bush continued: 'He touched all of us in places no one else could reach.'
1. Throw a marble at the dead Pope's head. Bonk!"

There was some significant fallout from the story. The *Daily News* reported it thusly: "*Press* publisher Chris Rohland sent Koyen packing, abruptly ending his two-year reign at the weekly handout. New York Sen. Chuck Schumer called [the Pope story]'s sick attempt at humor, 'The most disgusting thing I've seen in 30 years of public life.' Polish-American Congressional official Frank Milewski called it 'hate speech.' Advertisers weren't happy, either. The weekly received bad publicity from coast to coast. 'You can assume it [Koyen's suspension] had something to do with that,' Rohland told the *Daily News*' Paul Colford. 'But it brought a lot of things to a head. I wanted to take the paper in a different direction, and Jeff hasn't been buying into that.' The 36-year-old Koyen told me that Rohland summoned him to a 10AM meeting at the *New York Press*' Seventh Ave. offices and promptly suspended him for two weeks without pay. 'Instead, I quit,' said Koyen, who blasted Rohland as 'a spineless alt-weekly weenie' on the Web site Gawker.com." So fuckin' badass, Jeff!

You may have missed the real issue, which was even more convoluted. It wasn't even the stupid Pope story that got him in the real shit with his bosses. Originally, the cover of the *Press* was supposed to be a mock *New York Post* cover proclaiming the (false at the time) death of the Pope. The idea is that people see that cover and hate the *Post* because of their insensitivity or their factual blunder. The paper's lawyers said not to run it because Rupert Murdoch, owner of the *Post*, would sue the shit out of them. The owners spiked the mock cover and instead, they went with a picture of the Pope with the caption, "There's Nothing Funny About This Man Dying. Or Is There?" In his editorial, Jeff wrote a trite account about taking ecstasy in a club in Brooklyn, right next to the spiked cover of the *Post*. Just a nice little "fuck you" to the boss, the lawyers and everyone else you work with, right, Bonaduce?

A congressman from Brooklyn was so outraged that he suggested that citizens take the free paper from the bins on the street and throw them in the garbage. Bonaduce thought he had a brave First Amendment fight to gear up for and hit the F-List talk show circuit (a few radio stations and *Scarborough Country*). I wish I could link to it on YouTube, but no one gives a shit about pissing on Bonaduce's grave except me. The fight had nothing at all to do with free speech; it had to do with deliberately defying your employer's explicit wishes, which had been clearly stated.

Rather than take the suspension, badass Bonaduce tells his boss to take that job and shove it, then whines to Gawker about how his ex-bosses are a bunch of "weenies," which I guess is a tough name to call someone where he's from.

Well, cocksucker, how does it feel to get shoved out the door over a pile of bullshit and lose what you had built up over a period of time? Was it very humbling for you when people stopped calling and no one offered you a golden gig somewhere else? Are you still bitter that *Details* has no interest in your freelance writing? *GQ*? Not even *Paper*? Shit! You were editor-in-chief of the second largest alt-weekly in NYC, although maybe *Dan's Papers* and the free *Big Apple* paper are bigger than the *Press* now.

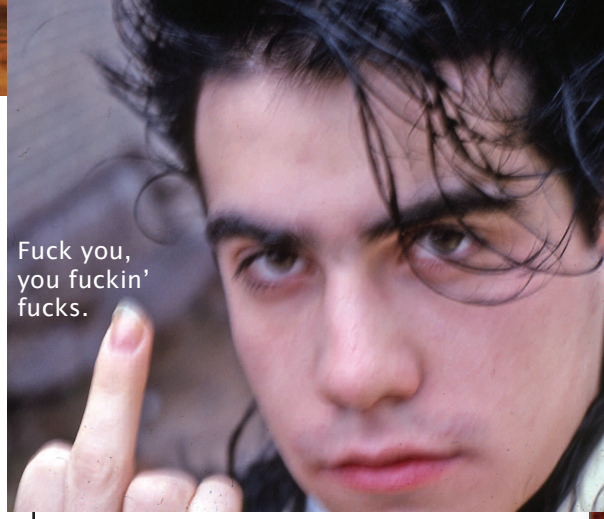
I didn't hear anything about Bonaduce for a long time, but one day last year I was at the gym, reading the *NY Post*, and I ran across a piece about visiting graves in Prague. I didn't get it at all; it was one of those stories where the author acts like he's your best buddy who's going to give you the insider's view of culture in a foreign land. Instead, the author came across like a douche trying to sound like a hip local rather than the ugly American that he was. I thought it was pretty bad writing, but I have low expectations at the gym and have actually read an AARP newsletter once, so you understand I don't expect the full literary experience whilst sweating all over myself. When I noticed that the article's author was Bonaduce himself, I was so jealous of his immense talent and his accomplishments that I started to weep openly on the recumbent bike. I didn't care who saw me, all I knew was that my hero, my bright star, my golden god, was shining down on me, all the way from a centuries-old boneyard in Prague.

I could see him in my mind's eye, his gay calf tattoo of a *Crank* logo shining in the sun, his eyeless sockets facing down into hell, his battered and beaten body hanging out of a rotting oak coffin. Oh, it is fucking beautiful. Now stay dead, you goddamn stupid motherfucker. Unless you want me to start quoting all of your letters in my next issue. I still have every e-mail you sent me and I know that you don't remember all the shit you said, but I can very easily refresh your alcohol-addled memory.

In an odd twist, after Bonaduce got the boot, he was replaced by an interim editor named Alexander Zaitchik. My own family had the surname Zaitchik until they came to the U.S. and it was Anglicized to Saitz.

The reason I wanted to write this piece (and it does usually take me this long to get to the original reason for everything) was to more directly beat a horse that had literally died, namely a phony dickhead named Jeff Chapman. Don't ever let it be said that I have a line I will not cross.

A lot of people in zines knew Jeff, or at least were familiar with him and his work, but he did all of his zine writing under the stupidest, lamest penname I have ever heard, Ninjalicious. My many problems with him have nothing to do with his zine, *Infiltration*, because I was a fan of the zine, and of Jeff's writing, and that has not changed. But the person, I can't even say the "man" because he wasn't much of a man, was about as two-faced and insincere as a person could possibly be.




I used to be an active member of the alt.zines newsgroup (NG), way before blogs, before the explosion of the web, back when people just wanted content to read and had ideas to share. It was a vicious, immature and insular community, with various anonymous people appointing themselves as authorities, gatekeepers and referees. On alt.zines, there were no factions at war, everyone was just tearing each other down. Being a person who never shies away from a verbal fight, I staked out my positions and joined right in. From time to time, someone would say something noble or righteous about how the group ought to be a place for newbies and old hands to share information and insight, post reviews, share techniques, and for everyone involved to help everyone else make better zines. Then that poster would be called a sellout asshole and the flame war would begin again.

As crazy as it sounds, I really do encourage people to do their own zines and I always have. It's not just because they make my zine look better by comparison, it's because I started my zine because no one would publish me and I found an audience in spite of that fact. For anyone out there who feels like their voice is being ignored, doing a zine can be very cathartic, even if it's a bad zine. It's not a good feeling to be coming up on thirty (or forty) knowing that you have very little to show for all of your years of experience except lines on your face and miles on your car. This issue will be the fifth bomb that I will drop on the world, with more to come, and it's still just as gratifying now as it was then, though the payoff is much weaker and the market's nearly gone.

One of the friendliest and most outgoing people in the group was Jeff. (I hated calling him Ninj and, privately, I never buy into people's fake names—it's just fucking gay, sorry.) We traded zines and many e-mails and then became friends. He wanted to create a web site for the zine community which would serve as a repository for good essays, links to distros and the best discussion threads from the NG. He asked me if I would contribute to the site; in fact, he wanted me to be the co-founder, and I said I would be happy to help. I wrote a long essay about how and why I got involved in zining and then I solicited a few other people to write similar pieces.

Jeff launched the site (it's still alive at http://members.tripod.com/altzines, but I haven't touched it in years) with my blessing and then we talked about what we could do to steer the NG toward something useful. We thought it would be a good idea for us to suggest one zine to the entire group called the "Zine of the Fortnight" (ZotF), then have people get their own copy and then have the whole group really dissect it, figuring out what was good and bad and what could be learned from it. We asked for volunteers but no one wanted to have strangers tear their babies apart, so Jeff asked me if I would do it. I said that I would but I didn't want to go first. Instead we chose Howard Miller's *Travelling Shoes*. The experiment was a modest success in that most people talked concretely about a zine that was current and below most people's radar.

When it came time to dissect my zine (*NegCap* #1), Jeff started by posting a long, positive review. I won't quote it all because even I am sick of reading my good press. I'll pick some choice nuggets.

"The premiere issue of *Negative Capability* is the only full-sized, glossy-colour-covered perzine I've encountered. Every feature in the 54-page zine is by and about publisher Josh Saitz. The back cover is a parody ad that I'd love to have in poster size; other than that, no ads in this first issue. I paid a whopping $3.95 Canadian and didn't feel ripped off, so I guess you could say I got a lot out of it. In my humble opinion, Josh has an excellent sense of humor and a lot of interesting stories to tell. I will continue to feel this zine is worth $3.95, if Josh can attempt to share with the human race some of the empathy he seems to have reserved for animals, and manage to come across as being slightly less contemptuous of his readers." [Contemptuous? ME?]

It only took a few replies before the thread devolved into a discussion of cruelty to animals and my startling lack of empathy for humans, but nothing meaningful came out of it. I was disappointed because I thought people would talk about the content of the zine in a critical way, not about me as a person, but really, my expectations are out of whack with reality.

The cover price was $3, but in Canada it was priced at $3.95, something Jeff mentioned in every single breath about my zine, although the pricing was not only out of my control, but also was still below my costs, something that he knew from our personal conversations. Each issue cost me about $1.80 to make and every copy sold would earn me $1.50, so you can do the math and figure out when I would break even. Later in the thread, someone was defending me by saying that as long as I was being funny, there was nothing to get upset about. Jeff responded, "When I'm offended by someone writing that they wish others would be raped and get AIDS, I don't think it's because I'm thinking about my weaknesses. I think it's because I realize that to wish such fates on anyone is incredibly cruel."

Now, let's expose Jeff as a hypocrite. A few weeks after my ZotF discussion, the next zine up was *Broken Pencil*, a Canadian review zine. In Jeff's estimation, there were "8 Awful Things About *Broken Pencil*" and #3 was about their thoughtless reviews, "This is probably my biggest problem with *BP*. The reviews all feel carelessly whipped off just in time to meet the deadline to me. Many reviews are dismissive, simply saying 'I didn't get this' or 'not my thing', but without explaining why. *And **any reviewer** who would conclude a zine review with the word 'whatever' **should be shot**.*"

The cruelty that Jeff was talking about was in *NegCap* #1 in a piece called, "How to Cope with Assholes." I wrote that I witnessed a man who intentionally drove his car over about a dozen pigeons, killing a few and mortally wounding many others. I suggested that he deserved to get AIDS and bleed into his kids' cereal. That's prison rules, but that's really how I felt at the time. If you can be wantonly cruel to animals without remorse, the world doesn't need you or your genes being perpetuated. I stand by that statement, but Jeff calls me "incredibly cruel." Yet, just weeks later, he says that anyone who would dare conclude a zine review with the word "whatever" *ought to be shot*. Now I am not saying that killing innocent animals is nearly as bad as giving a zine a half-assed review because we all know reviewing zines is *way* more important, but what I am saying is, Jeff is a fucking hypocrite for calling me cruel for doing something that he himself has done, i.e. used a literary device that's called hyperbole where you exaggerate something for effect.

I called him out on it privately and he said something like, "Mine was obviously a joke and you obviously mean it." To me, a joke is something that's, oh, what's the word? Oh yeah, *funny*. Shooting someone with a gun for a half-assed zine review isn't that funny, while having AIDS and bleeding into your

kids' cereal has a certain pathos and humor to it. Privately, Jeff also told me that my zine was one of his favorites (or "favourites," as he said) and that he couldn't wait to see my second issue. The whole thread is still out there if you're interested.

My favorite review on the thread was from Kris Kane, who wrote, "I looked at the cover of *Negative Capability* #1 and thought, 'Jeez, it's another *POPsmear*,' because the production values are zine-atypically high. Imagine my surprise when I started reading it and found out that Josh is so dedicated to doing his one-man rant / personal zine that he's footing enormous printing bills because he wants to do a professional job. We piss and moan about the cost of doing 48-page digest-sized photocopied zines, and this guy is blasting out 54-page full-size glossies, paying out of his own pocket. No ads. Amazing.

"Reading this zine is like hanging out with your new friend Josh on a slow, rainy Saturday and listening to him just go off on everyone and everything he loves, hates, and isn't sure about yet as he shows you around his apartment. The lack of a cohesive theme is really refreshing. It's a lot like flipping through a few dozen judgmental, funny, brutally honest channels on cable and finding a bunch of shows you hope to catch again next time they're on.

"Josh is a dichotomy, but the balance is believable and candid. To paraphrase Whitman in his defense (which would probably make Josh want to stab me in the throat), if he contradicts himself, fine, then he contradicts himself. His id is large. He comes right out and says a lot of things most people would have qualms about admitting they even *think*. A lot of it is hyperbole, a lot of it is over the top, and that's why it's funny. I wrote him shortly after reading it, saying, 'If you weren't so funny, I'd be afraid of you,' and that's about right. Thank god for humor.

"I can sort of see Ninj's points about it being so hate-fueled, but it doesn't bother me because I'm a pretty cranky s.o.b. myself a lot of the time and I think a lot of it is just Josh venting. I'm also reassured by the fact that Josh isn't hiding behind a persona—that's him, saying he thinks the retarded are a waste of space—and even though I think his honest response to that criticism would be, 'Hey, it's just a joke,' it might just be a cathartic 'look at the fucked up stuff I've been thinking' thing, too. Josh is brave to throw his unedited self out there like that, for sure."

If I keep publishing my positive reviews I am going to end up like Jeff Somers from the *Inner Swine*, pantsless and drunk somewhere, ranting about how "the man" keeps fucking me over. Just mentioning the *Inner Swine* means that Jeff will now have to reprint this entire section of the zine, along with ordering information, according to First Law of Jeffness.

My wife and I love Toronto and try to spend a week there each winter. When I finished my second issue, I planned a trip to Toronto. I asked Ninj, who lived in a suburb just outside the city, if he had any places of interest that my wife and I should check out. He sent me a long list of buildings that were worth "infiltrating," which was his fancy word for trespassing, but that wasn't really what I wanted. He asked me where we were staying and when I told him, he asked if I wanted to meet him. In my experience, meeting other zine publishers and fans is always a mixed bag. I know a few people that I consider close friends who I know only because they somehow discovered my zine, or I discovered theirs. But the largest group of people are those who insist on meeting me in person only to scare me into not meeting another zine person for months. Once I invited a fan over to smoke weed and talk about zines and that guy scared my wife so much that she locked herself in the bathroom. But Jeff seemed like such a nice guy, such a *Canadian*, that I couldn't turn him down.

We met at a bookstore on Queen Street in Toronto and I gave him copies of my new issue and he in turn gave me a huge pile of his back issues. We hung out and talked for a few hours and whenever I left to get a drink, or pee, he would open my zine and skim through it like a kid opening a Christmas present. Whenever I would return to the table, he would tell me that some aspect of it was bigger, better or brighter, compared to my first issue. Granted, he could be the kind of guy who says nice things but doesn't mean them. Or he could be a guy who means what he says to your face but if you ever asked him in front of your peers, he would just deny, deny, deny.

There is no doubt in my mind that not only did he think #2 was much better than #1 but that he thought my progress as a writer and designer were impressive. He even said that because #2 was so good, I would not keep on zining for much longer. I would get a whole bunch of ads from record companies and become the next above-ground magazine, like *Film Threat* or *Bitch*. I assured him that as long as I was planning to run nude photos of random famous people and to wish cancer on strangers, there was absolutely no way I would get advertising or get too big to be a zine.

On the NG, when *NegCap* #2 came out, it provoked a fierce debate. Some praised me,

Rust in Pieces, Jeff

some heaped even more scorn on me, but that's what happens and I took it like a man. What was really bothering me was that many of the NG stalwarts, who had already received advance copies of #2 and privately told me that they loved it, were all suddenly silent. Finally, in response to a positive review, I wrote, "The only thing pissing me off today is the fact that a few people on the newsgroup have gotten free ones and have said privately that they think it is a great leap forward in design and writing, but now they're all silent. Please, Ninj, stop pelting little kids with rocks and tell the folks what you think. And while I've got Ninj's attention, I have a nice idea. Since Ninj was kind enough to nominate me for the Zine of the Fortnight experiment, I would like to resurrect it and for the first round nominate *Infiltration* #11 as the next Zine of the Fortnight. Everyone interested in a fun and lively debate can send $2 to *Infiltration*."

As a bit of background, in previous posts I was lambasting a punk fucktard named Dan Halligan because he called me a liar, all because I *paraphrased* his negative review instead of *quoting* it. I have to give Dan leeway because he's really not that bright, but in this case, he was just talking out of his ass. I challenged him to produce a single lie from any of my zines or my posts and he could not. I am as honest as a person can be in this zine and I can suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous misfortune just like the next guy, but I am not a liar. So when I very sincerely asked Ninj to say something, *anything*, about my zine, I thought he would jump in to defend me, instead, he said, "First of all, LIAR, I don't think *Negative Capability* #2 is a great leap forward in design and writing. I found the design to be stronger in a few areas (cover, most titles) and weaker in a few others (TofC, the background image in Manifesto). I preferred the articles in the sophomore issue, but I think this was mainly because they had more interesting subjects, not necessarily

because the writing has leapt anywhere." [Just for the record, in public I would call him Ninj because he thought the authorities would use his trespasses against him. As far as I know, cops don't read zines.]

I thought that Jeff was actually a friend. I am getting assaulted from all sides on the NG and I ask him to say publicly what he's said privately but, instead of doing that, he calls me a liar (the one thing that was making me berzerker insane) and then says the exact opposite of what he had said to me in person. I responded as you might expect, but I was actually kind of soft on Jeff, I think. I said, "And after everything I've posted on the subject of being called a liar, I think it's really fucked up that you're calling me a liar."

Jeff responded, privately, "I was just joking about the 'liar' thing, Josh. Putting the word in all caps was as close as I could come to indicating that I was just making a silly reference to the other thread, because I really hate smileys. As far as I know, you've never lied about anything. Jeff (aka Ninj)." Whenever he wrote to me, he signed off as Jeff, because when I had asked him why he used that pseudonym, he admitted that it was lame, but said that it had been given to him early in his life and it just kind of stuck, like dogshit on my shoe, which brings us back to Jeff. It was a relief that he retracted calling me a liar, but I have NEVER in my life heard of caps being used to indicate sarcasm—otherwise half of this zine would be me screaming at you in all caps.

I wrote to Jeff privately and said that I thought it was actually even more fucked up that after he called me a liar, he directly contradicted himself vis à vis his comments about my zine. I didn't have to call *him* a liar, but I did call him two-faced. I always thought that he really did like me but didn't want the other kids to think that he did, so in public he had to keep taking shots at me as if to say that he wasn't on my payroll. I told him that when we met in that bookstore that he had specifically said that the design was a great leap forward (I thought it was an unusual compliment, so I remembered it) but then on the NG he said that the zine hadn't leapt anywhere. He said that he didn't remember meeting me but that it was possible he had said that on first glance. Didn't remember meeting me? He gave me his home phone number and address, told me that he lived with his family (maybe because he was ill, I don't know, he never said) and lots of other personal things. Here's a guy who used a bad penname in all of his dealings yet he gives his *home address* to me, a guy who does a mean and "hate-fueled zine." It is such bullshit.

I am sure that some long-time readers are seeing through everything I am saying and coming to a different conclusion. "Perhaps everyone was just saying nice things to you privately because they were afraid of your wrath," you think. Maybe Ninj hated my zine but didn't want to piss me off by saying it to me personally. That's not a good theory and here's why: If someone was afraid of pissing me off in a private e-mail, why would they then piss me off in a public place, and therefore have to face my public retribution?

The reason we became friends in the first place was because he liked my zine and I liked his. I told people publicly that I liked his zine and he told people that I was mean-spirited and cruel. Then he privately asked me and Kris Kane to help him make an alt.zines web site.

Most NGs have a FAQ that gives a history of the group, explains the terminology and acronyms, and gives newbies a place to start so they don't post something that's been asked and answered a hundred times. During the long revision process, each of us took a turn making changes, additions and corrections. The only thing that I had an issue with was the FAQ's blatant endorsement of software piracy. I am not on my high horse judging others because they can't afford software, but I think it's stupid and very immature to encourage people to steal in an official document.

When I graduated from college a long time ago, my family and friends gave me about $2,000 in cash, which was astonishing. All I could afford was a Mac Classic with a 9-inch monochrome screen, 4MB of RAM and an 80MB hard drive. With the money I had left over, I bought a copy of QuarkXPress 3.1 for $500. It was incredibly painful for me to do and there were lots of other things I could have spent the money on, but I wanted to look professional and I wanted to own the software that I had spent years learning. I asked Jeff repeatedly to take out the line "the best software being whichever one you can steal" and he said that he would.

When the FAQ was posted to alt.zines, this is exactly what it said, and I quote, "QuarkXPress costs about $600 (US)—or less, with competitive upgrades—and is the layout program of choice for high-end publishers, printers and service bureaus. XPress is probably the program to get, as long as you don't have to pay for it. In my opinion, whichever program you can get for free is probably the one to get, however Josh Saitz advises that 'stealing is wrong.'"

Everyone knows stealing is wrong and they do it anyway. My point was, and still is, that telling people to *steal* in a public document that represents you to the world is a bad idea because it makes zine publishers seem like thieves. If people want to pirate software, I can't stop them, but I also don't want my name on a document that says you should get the best program, the one that every single professional uses, as long as you don't have to pay for it. If you can't afford it, maybe you should use something cheaper. In every draft of the FAQ, it was written exactly as I quoted and his concession on the topic was the bogus addendum with my name at the end, which is even more insulting. I have no real problem disobeying laws if they are wrong, but I do have a problem with people who create content saying that it's okay to rip off other people who create content, simple as that.

We never had a falling out and I never bothered to say all of this stuff to him when he was alive because it wasn't worth the effort. His zine made trespassing into a kind of calling, so the fact that he also encouraged software piracy was at least ideologically consistent. He had his own agenda, roped me into it for a short time, and then we parted ways. It was one of the main reasons I completely gave up on the NG and its members. The few people whose zines I liked had given up the fight long ago, morphed into some half-assed web site or blog, or just disappeared entirely, never to be heard from again. Not me. Not yet.

Jeff's dead now. Does that change anything that he did? Does that undo the damage done? Does that make me a bad person for saying this stuff? I don't give a shit. I was talking about this very subject with another zine publisher right after Jeff died and I told him then what I am telling you now. At the time, my friend said that it would be really brave to respond to his obituary posting on the NG with a scathing indictment, but he also said that it would be wrong to incite people when they were emotionally vulnerable. He was right, so I kept all my comments to myself and let everyone talk about how sweet, charming and talented Jeff was. Unfortunately, death does not wash away all the sin. Nothing does. Jeff can never make it right, he can never admit how he really felt and he can never take back all the shit he said about me that pissed me off. No one can unpop that balloon. The only thing that can make this injustice right in my mind would be for me to dig him up like the dead horse he is and beat him down again, which I have done. Consider us even, Ninj. See you in hell.



***Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone; you are the one who gets burned. - Buddha***

I USED TO TELL MYSELF THAT I HAD A MINIMUM AMOUNT OF MONEY that it would take to get me out of bed. When I started my career, I wanted to make my age per hour. In the actual course of my life, I was close to earning my age very briefly between long stretches of making a little less and way more. I had a lot of weird jobs as an adolescent, from video store clerk to driving an ice cream truck—where I made a lot more money selling my old porno mags, smoke bombs and nickel bags to underage kids. See, I told you, I'm an asshole. But I needed the money and they all had way too much money, so in a sense, I was my own Robin Hood: taking from the rich and giving to *me*.

After I got fired by Bonaduce [see "Karoshi" in *NegCap* #4], I didn't know what to do to with myself. I felt like I had spent the last year accepting the idea of having a career instead of a job. I had worked hard to establish a reputation as a hard worker and a team player. In an instant, everything I had worked for was gone forever. I did what I always did in times of crisis: I slept in, smoked a lot of weed, watched a lot of TV, and wrote as much as I could. I had a lot of serious anger to deal with but I am over it now. I really feel like I am different now, like I've shed the skin that had those old wounds and I'm clean and whole again. I am sorry I am such a faggot sometimes—I can't help it, it's my nature. I'm really the opposite of gay, I like girls, but hey, I own the behavior.

I divided my time between the job search and *NegCap* #2, with the balance of my energy focused on networking. I had always fallen into jobs and with the rare exceptions of the first answering service and Milton, I had never gotten a job through a classified ad. I sent out copies of my first issue with letters to anyone involved in the world of zines. I figured if I was going to be a complete failure in the legitimate world, I could at least aim for success in the underground.

The first zine that I ever saw was John Kelly's *XYY* and it changed me in some subtle way. It was a silly smorgasbord of jokes and ideas that didn't take itself seriously. At the time, I had never heard the word "zine" and thought that *XYY* was just a small, local magazine, even though it didn't have ads and did have plenty of curses. I decided to find out if it was still being published so I could trade with its maker. I found John pretty easily because he had done a few interviews that were online and even though the zine was long defunct, he was still interested in talking about it. He was very flattered that I remembered his zine and we developed a friendly e-mail relationship.

He told me that he was working for Columbia University's law school, in charge of both publications and public relations, which I thought was a cool gig. I always wonder how people that I regard as degenerate fuck-ups like me make it in the real world because I used to think I'd be doing a shitty McJob until I dropped dead without insurance or savings. Most people stumble through life without much of a game plan, so why should I have any idea what I am doing? John said that the school had just built a brand-new building a few blocks from his current office and he was going to move into much nicer digs. He asked if I was available to help him move, which I thought was a weird question. I was jobless and coming up on the end of my unemployment benefits, so I was up for anything.

I had to take three different subways for 45 minutes and then walk another 15 minutes, but I found it. I also discovered Tom's Restaurant, which is the real place that they used as the exterior of Monk's on *Seinfeld*. They always shoot it to obscure the word Tom's but it was cool to see a landmark that I had always wondered about. John and I hit it off immediately and I helped him move for a couple of days. Then he asked me to help him with designing a newsletter. Then he asked me if I was available to come work for him and I said that I was.

John was a strange guy who would often say the most outlandish things with a straight face. At the time I thought he was wearing a great social mask because underneath it, when no one was around, he was a very deranged guy. I doubt he would disagree, though he might think that the normal part of his personality is the "real" guy and the wacky one just came out around people like me. The only real downside to the job was that I had to use a PC and I fucking hate PCs. I love Macs and people will always give me shit about it, but come on, you know Windows sucks. If you are a Unix geek, I give you mad props, sensei.

I got to meet a lot of the law professors and John decided to revive a long-abandoned monthly gazette for faculty and students, which is the kind of gig that I often specialize in. I wrote and edited stories about professors and scholarships, and the kind of insular crap that you have to work there to care about. Nothing that I am proud of but nothing I am ashamed of, either.

There wasn't always a lot of work, so during fallow periods I would chat with whoever was online. One guy I spent a lot of time talking to was my friend Kris Kane, who used to be a superhero and also did some zines I liked a long time ago. We both shared a very sick sense of humor and he would do his best to send me links and images meant to repulse. If he sent a particularly vile image, I would save it to a hidden directory on the drive so I could burn a disc and delete it later.

John once gave me a copy of a new literary journal that had published one of his short stories. It was about a guy who takes a kid to a ball game, but the thing I remember most is that there was a scene in the ball park bathroom where the guy has to pee. John wrote that the guy "held his penis like he was holding a dead mouse" and reading it made me feel sick to my stomach and itchy in my bathing suit area. I liked it, it made me feel weird, and I said, "It's good." Not a personal opinion, just a simple statement of fact, which means more to a writer like John, I am sure. I didn't know what the story meant, but I liked it.

John got me a raise, health insurance, and he said I should join the union. Joining would mean another raise, every holiday in the world and a lot more benefits, which sounded great. I had never been in a union before but I like money. When we first moved into the new building, we shared a small office but my desk was perpendicular to his, so he never saw what I was up to. After a few weeks, he took over the office next door and moved out, leaving me alone in the bigger office. He had a couple of interns that loved him; they were like an all-Asian *Charlie's Angels* of law students. They were all enjoying their summer internships because working for John was pretty low-pressure.

John asked me to find someone to help me out with the workload as it grew and I immediately thought of my best friend Peter. He is that rare friend that I have fought with maybe two times in twenty years because he's easygoing. When I called Peter, he said he was looking for something to do and we agreed that he would start the next Friday.

Peter was early on Friday, did a great job and impressed John. I was psyched that I was going to get to work with Peter. After work that first day, he wanted to meet up with his girlfriend Lisa, who worked downtown, but got off later than we did. To kill an hour while she finished, we enjoyed the school's T1 (this was still in the days of dial-up). When we got bored with that, I remembered the pictures that Kris had sent me. I spent ten minutes trying to find them but when I did, Peter closed the door and we sat back to enjoy the freak show. There were some vile ones from rotten.com of death and dismemberment, maybe a hermaphrodite or two. I don't remember all of them, but they were meant to shock. After the show we split and I said I would need him to come back on the following Tuesday at 10AM.

# 过劳死

Over the weekend I got the flu and was sick in bed both days. I was still feeling awful on Monday, so I called in sick for the first time. John could tell I was really sick and he wished me a speedy recovery. I started to feel better by that night and I was there bright and early the next day. When I got to work, John came into my office and immediately told me to follow him into his office. He looked like he had seen a ghost.

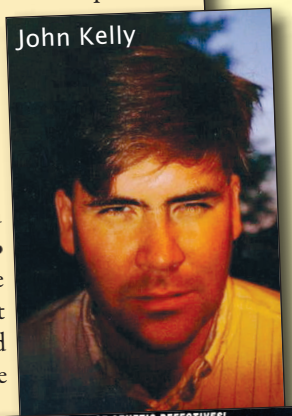
I followed him into his office and closed the door behind me. He sat in his chair and he looked around nervously. He didn't make eye contact at all. I said, "What's up, John? You look really freaked out." I thought maybe someone in the office had died or something. He said, "When you were out yesterday, I needed something that you were working on. I went on your computer and I saw some very inappropriate images in the history." He started stammering and mumbling, "We could get sued. I can't have this..." I knew exactly what he was talking about and I felt like such an asshole. The directory was hidden, but I didn't think to clear the history in Photoshop. Every single image that we had looked at was there for him to see. He had an entire day to think about why a nice guy like me would have that on his *work* computer: because I am a fucking idiot, I am immature, I believe that I will never get caught, I am sloppy and selfish and I don't think ahead. I just copped to it. I said that I know I am an asshole and that I am sorry and that it was a stupid mistake. I asked him to just think about it and not make any rash decisions. Nothing bad had come of it, I learned my lesson, I really was contrite, and I still feel like an asshole about it many years later. There was no need to fire me, but John felt that he had no choice. I had put myself, and by extension, him, in harm's way with my actions.

I asked John what I should tell Peter since I was no longer working there, he also was no longer needed. Great. I cost two people their jobs. Peter was coming at 10AM so John said I could wait for him. That was a really awkward, silent hour. When Peter showed up, I am sure that I looked like I had seen a ghost, too. I told him that I needed him to come with me to run an errand and as we walked toward the elevator, I apologized. I told him that I was an idiot and a fuck-up and that John had seen all the sick pictures we had looked at the previous week and fired me because of it. Peter was shocked and upset. He said, "Yeah, that stuff is gross but we didn't make it, we were just looking at it. You think your boss doesn't have porn?" I knew that John was at least as twisted as I was but he was smart enough to never mix it with his work. He always took his work very seriously and I never had. Until I got fired that day, I had always felt like I was pretending to work in places rather than actually working there. I knew that my attitude had to change and this was just the catalyst.

I didn't want to call my wife and tell her that I had been fired again, after less than nine months. I also didn't want to tell her about Peter, but I had to man up and call her from a pay phone on the street. My wife sounded really pissed at me and more than that, she was disappointed. I knew because she said so. Not that she was pissed, but that she was disappointed—not just about the job, but also because I had lost the friendship with John.

When I got home, my wife was very sympathetic and kind to me but that only made me feel worse, like I was unworthy of her. I promised myself that I would find a job, even if it wasn't the perfect gig, just so I could get back into the groove of working a steady job. I thought about all the people that I knew in the world who might be able to offer me some kind of employment and decided to sit down and e-mail them.

One of the first people I contacted was James Morel, the publisher of one of my all-time favorite zines, *POPsmear*. He also owned a company that printed postcards so I figured that since he had said he was a fan of my work and he had an empire of print production, he might have a decent gig for me somewhere. I also remembered that during my time with Bonaduce a girl from the *Press* had quit to go work for James and that Bonaduce had taken it very personally. After her last day at work, Bonaduce took me aside at lunch and told me a story (probably made up) about how James had once pissed in someone else's drink when they weren't looking, as a prank. It sounded like sour grapes to me at the time because James was a very successful entrepreneur in a way that no other zine publisher was and Bonaduce was an expendable cog at a middling alt-weekly. I was jealous of James, too, which isn't surprising considering James was a success and I was an unemployed loser.




None of my other attempts to land a job panned out, but James responded immediately and asked me to come in to interview for a job there. Knowing that he had seen my zine and knew my productions skills, I thought I could get a good gig. When I went for the interview, I ran into my former co-worker. (I'd prefer not to name her because she was so nice to me and probably doesn't want to get dragged into anything, but assholes will always be called out by their full names.) She said that it was a great place to work and I was kind of excited at the prospect. They showed me around their huge offices on 23rd Street and I was impressed by all the equipment and all of the distractions. When I got there, the editorial staff was playing air hockey and foosball in the office "fun room." This was in the days before dot-coms took care of your drycleaning or let you nap at your desk and I was blown away.

They took me into the production department and introduced me around. As a zine publisher, it was like seeing where dreams come from, and even though the postcard business was separate from *POPsmear*, I felt like the postcards were supporting the zine and making it easier and cheaper to do the zine. The interviewer said that they used expensive equipment to make disposable printing plates and ganged up all the various postcards into one huge broadsheet and then cut it up to save time and money. I was expecting James to come out to meet me, but he never did.

They sat me down at a computer and showed me what I was supposed to do. Various account executives would submit their postcard designs on Zip or CD and I was to arrange them as efficiently as possible onto the page template and pre-flight all the files. I'm assuming that my readers are somewhat familiar with printing terminology but if you don't know what I am talking about, go ask the internets or do the googler. I can do tangents on any topic, but I know I will bore you if I explain everything that goes into printing, especially since this part of the story is almost over. They liked me and I liked them. When we talked about money, they offered me more than I made at Columbia and I thought it was a good deal. I wanted my wife to be happy, I wanted to get my foot in the door, and I was sure that before too long I would go from being the production monkey kept in the back cage to being an editor at *POPsmear*. She asked me when I could start and I said I was available the next day. She told me to come in at 8PM the next day to start work. I gave her a confused look and said, "I'm sorry, did you say 8PM?" She looked back at me, just as confused and said, "You'll be working the third shift by yourself from 8PM-5AM." They had never mentioned these hours before and it sounded crazy. I really didn't know what to say, so I said that it was fine, thanked her for the job and then I left.

I walked home and I kept asking myself whether or not I could handle those hours. I thought that I could since I had always been a serious night owl and did my best work after 2AM. As I got closer to home, I realized it would never work. My wife was working all day long and usually didn't get home until 7 or 8 at night. If I took the job, I would probably only get to see her on the weekends and then my hours would be so fucked up that I would be awake when she had to sleep and I would be exhausted when she wanted to do stuff. I presented it to my wife as a good news/bad news situation and we both agreed it wasn't for me. I called them during the day the next day and told them that I had taken some time to think about it and the hours just weren't going to work, but if they had anything else available during more normal business hours, I would love to apply for it. They said that the only opening they had was the third shift and if I didn't want it, they would keep my info on file, but lots of other people were on file for day-shift jobs. I really wasn't sure if I should be mad at James because he had offered me a real, paying job, it was just the worst job that he had. Again, I felt like a big loser and started sending out resumes again.

It was about this time that depression started to set in. I was foundering and I felt like I was coming to the end of my options. I changed a lot of the info on my resume to de-emphasize the print production and focus more on the writing. This time I sent my new resume to editorial jobs that interested me. If they said, "You'll be writing about marketing for a tire trade magazine," I ignored it, but if the ad said, "We need a very creative, detail-oriented person with excellent written and grammatical skills," I would immediately send in my new resume.

The first call I got was from Half Moon Publishing and the guy on the phone said that the work was normal hours in a midtown office, writing interesting stuff in a creative atmosphere. To me, that sounded ideal, especially because it was a salaried position, not hourly. When I got there, I saw that the majority of the cubicle walls were covered with hard-core porn. As soon as I saw the porn, I started trying to talk myself into it. I wanted a job, I wanted to make money and I wanted to get my career going but it was not an easy sell. I met with Chris, who was a friendly guy in a suit who was maybe a year or two older than me. He had a private office in the middle of all the cubicles and he didn't have any porn on the walls, just piles of magazines on the empty chairs.

He reviewed my resume in front of me and noticed that we both went to the same college, though I was a few years behind him. He liked that and then told me about the job. He handed me four plastic sheets of color slides. On the slides were pictures of some anonymous girl taking off her clothes and playing with herself. Then he showed me what the finished product looked like in one of the magazines.



**Human beings were not meant to sit in little cubicles staring at computer screens all day. - Office Space**

There was a series of pictures where a young girl got progressively more naked, usually ending with a close-up of what he called "pink." Surrounding the pictures was a series of quotes and biographical information along the lines of, "Svetlana likes it when a guy is aggressive, 'I like to be held down and fucked hard,' she says." Well, it turns out that she didn't say that. The guy that quit the job I was applying for had said that for her, and now they needed a new guy (me) to make her say that. He gave me the slides and a legal pad and told me to make up stories for two different girls, as a writing sample. He led me to a cubicle near his office and sat me down. The entire cubicle was covered with more hard-core porn and, once again, I was at a loss as to what to do, so I did what I do best. I made this new girl, let's call her Amanda, into a dirty slut who was just starting to discover her wild side. As I held each slide up to the fluorescent lights in the ceiling, I tried to put myself in the mind of the girl in the pictures. That frightened and depressed me for some reason. I am not really sure why, but for the first time in my life, I actually identified with the girl in the porn, not the guy. I felt really sad for her. I couldn't decide if it was better or worse that I wasn't going to use her name with the pictures. Chris didn't even know or care what her name was, he said that they bought sheets of slides from various freelance photographers, along with the rights to do whatever they wanted with them.

The scenario in my head was of a creepy photographer who was tricking girls into letting him take naked pictures of them as a modeling audition and instead of getting them modeling work, he sold sheets of slides to this company to do whatever they wanted. I wasn't turned on in the slightest; I almost felt like I was party to a photographic rape and I felt really gross and dirty. As all of this was going through my head, I stared down at my tie and I felt like such an asshole. This is how it starts, I thought. First, you compromise a little and next thing you know, you're the photographer because there's more money plus blowjobs from all the damaged girls you can lie to. The highest position I could attain would be to hire people to do the dirty work for me, which is like going from drug dealer to drug lord. Just as awful, but on a larger scale.

After a few minutes stewing in my head, I remembered why I was there: to get a fucking job. My unemployment was going to run out eventually, I had no real prospects, my bank account was dwindling and even though my wife had offered to support me, the macho asshole in me said I'd rather write porn than sink to that. So I wrote some porn. Amanda was a dirty slut on the inside, but to the outside world, she was a sweet girl-next-door type. She liked sex; she was not forced into it because her uncle fingered her or because her daddy left her when she was a baby. This is where the creative writing came into play because it took all the creativity that I could muster to change the horror show I saw on the slides into a sexy story that would make guys want to jerk off. I can't say that I am proud of what I wrote, but for genre writing, it was above average.

At the end of my writing test, Chris gave me a stack of free porno mags to take home as a consolation prize, but I only held on to them for this story and once they were scanned for this zine, they were donated to my dentist's office.

I turned in my work and Chris said he would call me in a few days. He never did. Once again, it easily could have been that I was not convincing when I said I was interested in working there, I could handle the porn, and that I really wanted this job. I really *didn't* want anything to do with them but they saved me the trouble of quitting on my first day by not hiring me. They must be able to tell who can handle it and who can't because I can't handle it.

Purely 18 The Innocent Babes You Crave!
HAWK
HAWK
SEPTEMBER 1996
Micky's Such A Naughty Young Girl
"I've Been So Bad... But It Feels So Good!"
Alone And On Her Own
Part-Time Student Full-Time Slut
SPECIAL SECTION
Sneaky Panty Peeking
MORE PAGES SAME LOW PRICE

I was not good enough to write porn captions for this magazine.

After a few more weeks of making calls and sending out resumes I heard from another one of those "creative" editor jobs. They said it was adult-oriented, but not porn. I don't know how you would categorize *Penthouse Letters*, but I would consider it porn. My definition of porn is anything I can't look at with my mom around, but you can draw your own line. I had a few days before my interview at *Penthouse* to discuss it with my wife and we came to the same conclusion. It was worth going to an interview to see what it was. If I was copy-editing other people's work, or writing a column, or even just proofreading, that would be okay. At least *Penthouse* has a name that people know and as a horny teenage boy I was really into both *Penthouse Forum* and *Letters*, so I can't act all holier-than-thou about it and, again, I needed a job. Best-case-scenario: I get the gig, they like my work and six months later I move on to something else once I get the stink of unemployed loser off me. Worst case, they make me write porn and then fire me because it's not hot enough.

I was interviewed for the job by their senior editor Ed in his filthy, narrow office. The room was thirty feet deep but just eight feet across. He interviewed me about my schooling, my work experience and what I thought about *Penthouse*. I was a bit too enthusiastic about my appreciation for *Letters*, but in this case, I was overcompensating for my lack of enthusiasm in previous interviews. I didn't want to lose the gig because I couldn't convince someone that I was into it. Ten minutes into the interview he asked me if I minded if he smoked. Of course I mind, I have fucking asthma, but I wanted the job, so I said, "G'head," like a good New Yorker. He lit up and about a minute later I had a terrible coughing fit, to the point where he actually got up and got me a glass of water and handed it to me with the hand holding his lit cigarette. I flashed forward in my mind to a staff meeting and saw myself sitting next to Ed the chimney while smoke billowed out of him.

He seemed to like me from the start and the interview was going well. I gave the right answers and asked the right questions. When he asked if I had been reading the magazine recently I had to tell him that I hadn't because I had just gotten married and we were still in the honeymoon phase. Ed nodded like he knew what I meant and let it go. Then he leaned in and told me that lately *Penthouse* had been really pushing the envelope by showing women peeing on each other and the readers really seemed to like it. Then he leaned back in his chair and laughed heartily. Then he straightened up and leaned in again, "Just between us, all of the letters that we get about how great the peeing is are written by Bob [Guccione, publisher of *Penthouse*] because he's really into that these days." I didn't know how to respond, but I said, "Wow, that's so funny!" What I wanted to say was, "I know it's *Penthouse*,

but have you no journalistic integrity at all?" He had answered my unasked question without saying a word.

He took me around to meet the other guys on the team (no, there were no women working there) and they were friendly and seemed pretty normal. After the whole process was over, I spent the entire trip home telling myself that it was just a stepping stone. I left myself open to the possibility that maybe writing porn was a viable career—after all, lots of Jews had gotten rich in porn, why not me? I hoped to learn as much as I could about the business so I wouldn't have to stay too long. They never called me again.

A few weeks later, I started thinking maybe I should lower my standards. Not about money, but about what I was willing to do. I got a call from a nice lady at a company called Pink Coyote. You may know them as the publishers of such popular titles as *Oriental Doll*, *Black Tail* and *Over 40*, all magazines I subscribe to. It seemed like my destiny was to work in porn because only pornographers were interested in talking to me. The owner interviewed me in her office, which was somewhat clean but very poorly decorated. On the wall in the hallway was a neon sign of a pink coyote and it was then that I started to think about all the stupid companies that are named a color plus an animal. I think names are so important in business and for some reason the name Pink Coyote struck me as somehow lacking in imagination.

The people were very friendly, though a couple of the employees gave me the creeps—I am sure that's par for the course in porn. It was a small operation and their job was basically to take the materials provided to them by various pornographers and put it together into a magazine. The job required me to be both a designer and an editor and I actually liked the idea of being able to do both. A guy named Cliff showed me around the office and let me watch as he went through all of the steps involved. It was just like doing this zine, if every picture featured an Asian ass, a fat ass, a black ass or an old ass. After about an hour of working with this guy, I knew I could do it. The owner offered me the job on the spot because she said she liked me. I asked when they wanted me to start and they said the next day. I had nothing on my calendar except more job searching, so I said I would take the job and then I began the long process of trying to rationalize the whole thing.

Their offices were on lower Broadway, right near the old Tower Records and half a block from *Time Out New York*, a place I really did want to work. I knew there was good food in the area and I was actually excited that I could shop for CDs on my lunch hour, a luxury that I had denied myself since getting fired by John. They set me up with my own office, a brand-new Mac tower and gave me a huge pile of material to work on. In addition to doing all of the porn, the company also did print production for business magazines, travel brochures and lots of other stuff, but porn was the bread and butter.

I don't remember what magazine they gave me to work on first, but it was pretty straightforward. Put all the copy and images on the page in an interesting way, then make sure the copy is error-free, the images are straight, and that's pretty much it. I cranked through that shit all morning and into the afternoon. I was too afraid to leave, but thankfully someone suggested I go take an hour for lunch. I got pizza at Two Boots and then wandered around Tower for a good half hour before returning to the office. I finished the day feeling burnt-out but content that I had completed a full day of work for the first time in almost six months.

When I got home, my wife wanted to hear all about it. She has nothing against porn—though she's not a consumer—and she was proud of me for making it all the way through the day. The more I talked about what I had done, the more I started to feel gross about it. When I told my wife about all the porn I had been looking at she asked me if I had become desensitized to it. Not yet, was my first thought. I had to think about it for a few minutes but my answer remained the same. I took out my resume to update it and saw the jobs I was listing: *New York Press*, Columbia University's School of Law, *Black Tail Magazine*. With *Black Tail* at the top, it looks awful. Even if I substituted Pink Coyote, my next interview would surely ask me about what I did for them. I could do what all the other people did when they left, which is talk exclusively about the travel brochures and business publications.

I couldn't shake the feeling that every day I worked there would be yet another day that I wasn't working toward anything meaningful. I didn't want a career in porn, as a star or in print production. It's funny how an actor can do 1,000 movies and not be called a star, but you suck one dick on camera, and you're instantly a "porn star." As the night wore on, I became more and more convinced that I had made a mistake by taking the job and I wanted it off my resume and out of my life. I tossed and turned that night and drove my wife crazy. She put it to me straight: If you can't do it again, just quit. As usual, she was right. I called my boss at 3AM and left a message saying that I was very sorry but that I didn't think I could do it. I appreciated the opportunity, wished them luck replacing me and hung up.

My boss called me when she got in at 9AM and told me that it would be okay. I didn't argue, I implied that my wife didn't approve and she got the message. Then she asked "Where can I send your check?" That made me feel worse, but I needed the money. A few days later I got a check from her for a few hundred bucks, which sent me into a tailspin about whether or not I could do it. After a few days, I realized I just didn't have it in me to try porn again. I wanted to just give up and start over. I had exhausted all of my contacts. I felt like every HR person in the city had seen my resume twice. I was tired of the endless rejection.

PORN STAR NIKKI NYCE SEDUCES OUR MASCOT MINKA!
Oriental Doll
ASIAN STRIPPER SUPREME: LEANNI LEI IN A NEW INTERVIEW & WILD ACTION PHOTOS!
SUZI SUZUKI BURIES THE BONE WITH A MEGA HUNK!
COMPLIMENTARY COPY NOT FOR RESALE
I was overqualified to write porn for this magazine.

By this time it was the summer of 1999 and the world was being swept away with millennial fever and fears of a massive Y2K bug that would cripple the world's computers. Fuckin' idiots. There was also a lot of talk of a terrorist attack on NYC, specifically targeting Times Square. I remembered the first time the World Trade Center had been bombed in 1993 and I decided that there was no way I was going to be in the city for New Year's Eve.

My wife and I had been sharing a 350 sq. ft. studio for five years and thanks to my unemployment, we couldn't afford to move. While our rent had gone up a few bucks a year, the market had exploded. We were paying $1,100 for our studio, but in the real world, studios were $1,400 and one-bedrooms started at $2,000 a month. We both felt trapped in our small space by the market and it was a terrible feeling.



*My job consists of basically masking my contempt for the assholes in charge while I fantasize about a life that doesn't resemble Hell. - American Beauty*

The only good thing that I had in *my* life was my wife, and my misery was starting to bleed into *her* life. She was also getting fed up with living in such a small place with no hope of moving somewhere better. We talked every day about what we could do and eventually we decided we should move someplace where we could afford more space. The outer boroughs were out of the question. The only place we both liked was San Francisco, where I was living when we met in '94. With our heads full of romantic notions, we decided to leave everything behind and move to San Francisco.

My grandmother lived in Mill Valley, just across the Golden Gate from San Francisco, and she offered to put us up until I could find a job. Since my wife's company has offices all over the world, she put in for a transfer at her job and at least we knew *she* had something lined up. At the end of 1999, we moved in with my grandmother for all of three weeks. We bought a used Honda Civic, rented a huge two-bedroom apartment with a fireplace and ocean views for $1,200 and we settled in to start our new life.

My wife started her new job downtown while I spent my days at home searching for a job. I answered dozens of ads, including one that was just a few blocks from our apartment for a text-only startup web site called Craig's List. They didn't have much money but they had a talented group of dedicated young people who were planning to cash in on the dot-com boom that was already underway. I needed money, not pipe dreams, so it never happened. While I looked, I finished *NegCap* #3 and put the whole print job on a credit card. I wanted to focus on the job search and the zine was not only distracting me, I also thought that the debt would motivate me to find a job and work my ass off. I also thought that publishing it might actually help me make the contacts necessary to find a new job.

Since I had worked at the *NYPress*, I figured I could get a job working at the SF equivalents, either the *SF Weekly* or the *SF Bay Guardian*. The *SF Weekly* had one opening as an editorial assistant that paid $25 grand a year. I figured it was worth a shot but when I called them they said the position had been filled. I sent my resume to the *Bay Guardian* and they called me the day they got my resume. They were impressed with my credentials and invited me in for an interview and a Quark test. Before I hung up, I asked about two things: hours and the salary. They offered me $15 an hour based on my experience, and I literally laughed out loud at them. I was getting $18 at the *Press*, $25 at Columbia and I couldn't afford to take a job at that rate. I remember clearly saying to them, "If you ever have a position that pays what I am looking for, please give me a call, until then, thanks anyway." That was the story that began this piece oh-so-many years ago and it was the moment in my career when I decided to stop being so passive. When I stood up for myself, I got my pride back, which really helped me to stay unemployed for even longer.

In my desperation, I discovered eBay and PayPal, two relatively new web sites. In its first year of operation, PayPal would give you $5 just for signing up and, if you got someone else to sign up, you would get another $5 and your friend would get $5. All you needed to sign up was an e-mail address, so I signed up for a bunch of free e-mail addresses and then PayPal'd all the money back to my main account until I had more than $100. Then I started selling all the collectible crap I had been holding on to because it would be "worth something, someday." That "someday" was *now*.

I sold old CDs, books, magazines, collectibles and anything that no longer held any sentimental value. With the money, I went to a local music store and bought some high-quality bootlegs. Many of them were generic green CD-Rs with inserts that were clearly color photocopies. That's when I got the idea to bootleg the bootleggers. If I copied a bootleg and then sold it on eBay, I was helping music collectors like me complete their collections, not a scammer who was ripping off strangers to survive. I sold a few copies of CDs and while I got a few complaints, most people were happy just to get the music. I made beautiful glossy stickers and color copies of the original inserts and most of the time, my copies were indistinguishable from the originals.

Then I got even more clever. Whenever I sold an item and the final price was high, I would contact the other high bidders who had lost, tell them that the winning bidder was a deadbeat and then offer them the disc for their last bid. Most people were thrilled to think they'd won something that they had already lost and they jumped at the chance. The best part was that since these buyers weren't part of the original transaction, they couldn't complain to eBay or give me negative feedback because, technically, we had never made a deal through eBay. Since then eBay has gone out of its way to make my petty scams nearly impossible but I am sure that there are many other clever people who have devised even greater schemes.

If it hadn't been for this petty scam, I would have drowned in debt and been evicted from my apartment, and I didn't have a plan for that possibility. After a few months of struggling just to get by, I finally got another call from the *Guardian* telling me that they could pay me what I wanted and they needed me to come in immediately.

The guy who called me said his name was Victor. He liked my resume and needed me to start as soon as I could. He said the job was in the art department, not production, so instead of ads, I would be working with the editorial staff to turn their copy into completed pages. When I went down to their offices, I was surprised by how big they were and how many different people worked there. I met Victor at his desk and he interviewed me for a good twenty minutes before he said, "Let's see what you can do." He sat me at a computer and wrote down where I could find the pictures and copy for a story in the upcoming issue. Half an hour later I printed a proof for him and he told me I had the job.

The hours were just like the *Press*, 10 to 6 except on press day, when I would be expected to pitch in with everyone until the last page was sent to the printer. The *Press* was still using boards and tissue paper, but the *Guardian* was already digital, sending PDFs of each completed page, except for the ad pages. I liked that the art department had its own area that was physically separated and a few feet higher than the rest of the office because it made me feel less like a bottom-dweller in the *Guardian* food chain. In the beginning, it was just me, Victor and a girl named Mirissa, so it was pretty obvious how badly they needed help but I also wondered what had happened to whatever poor schmuck I was replacing. I bought a used Acura Integra so I could get back and forth to work and let my wife drive the nicer Civic.

The best thing that happened at the *Guardian* was that I finally made some new friends. The first few months in SF had been spent alone in my apartment, making runs to the post office to mail shit out. Victor and I got along very well and during the long production nights on press day we got to know each other. I heard from some other people in the production department that Victor was in a band, which explained the tattoos and B.O. I figured everyone in San Francisco was in a band or had a secret life in the sex trade. When I searched for his name, I discovered Victor was not just in any band, he was the bass player for Camper Van Beethoven. He was in the credits for "Take the Skinheads Bowling" and other alternative classics. David Lowery (singer and songwriter) had disbanded CVB years before

to start Cracker, but when I first started at the *Guardian*, CVB were working together on a greatest hits CD and had a big reunion tour planned.

One thing I didn't realize until a few weeks in was that Victor was gay. He never tried to hide it or pass and when I first asked him about his personal life, he talked about his "husband" very matter-of-factly. Mirissa had a great working relationship with Victor, but she was always a little abrupt with me; it's quite possible that she saw me as an interloper. It's possible that Victor was attracted to me and not her, just because I have a penis, and that fact bothered her. Maybe she was just a bitch. I will never know, but it would not be the last time that a gay guy wanted to hire me for the wrong reasons.

The work was pretty easy and the team worked well together. I met the owner a few times, chatted up the editors whenever I could and really made an effort to make friends. In the back of my mind, there was always the hope that one day I could move over to the editorial side and actually write for the paper. Just like at the *Press*, however, I found the paper's content to be a lot of hollow rhetoric and self-congratulatory bullshit. There's also something about hooker ads that cheapens a publication, to me. There are whore-ish ads in *New York* magazine, but they're not *hookers*, they're *high class call-girls*. I made a weed connection with a kid named Matt who liked to take smoke breaks on the roof. It was just too easy, and when something is too easy, bank on me making the tiniest effort to get it done. While he smoked me out with the free weed, he offered to sell me more weed. That's salesmanship, bro. If only they'd legalize it already, they could make some serious cash in taxes and I could stop asking people I'd rather not ask.

I always felt doomed there. I am not sure why, exactly. I guess I always felt like the New Yorker in me would always rankle San Franciscans. I am not delicate, I am often profane and eventually I cross the line to everyone, even my wife. I just need to know where the line is, so I can skip across it. I did my work, helped anyone who asked and didn't really care what you were doing over the weekend. Maybe that's a personality flaw, but I think I'm doing you a favor by not asking you about your weekend because I doubt you really care about my plans. Usually when I was asked what I was doing over the weekend, I would say, "I am probably going to have sex with my wife and catch up on shows on TiVo," which was probably true at the time. I could tell that this offended people but I really didn't care. I feel like if you're offended by what I say, you're the one with the problem. When they replied that they were going to see their parents, I would feign excitement: Your folks? Really? Where do they live? That sounds so fucking awesome! Tell them I said hello! Is that what you want?

Victor K., my old boss.

I know that I never really felt like a member of the team. Usually, the later it got, the more I wanted to go home and see my wife. For almost everyone else, work always came first. That's not me. Never has been, never will be. Most people come to the realization too late that it's family that matters, not money, not material things, but being engaged in a loving relationship that helps nurture you as a person. I have always known this and have always put being with my wife at the top of my list of things to do forever. The jobs will come and go. The friends, too. The only constants in my life are my wife and my family, and that fact is always present in my mind. When I am away from my wife for too long, we both are miserable. We get impatient and bicker because we miss each other. I will call myself a faggot in a second but I am on a roll. Almost every employer I've ever had has known that I am there for the money, and all other things being equal, I would rather be home with my wife. This is supposed to be the "nice" in this "nice" issue. I am very good at what I do and I work very hard when I am on the clock, but I work so I can spend more time with my wife, not less.

Victor asked me to stay late one night. When we were alone, he said that Mirissa was going to take a short leave of absence and he wanted me to take her position. I said that would be cool with me since we were both doing the same job. Mirissa also worked a full shift every Saturday, usually by herself. I told Victor I couldn't do weekends and he said that was fine, I could keep my hours the same. After Mirissa was gone, a girl from ad production named Lori was promoted to the art department and she joined us, completing the circle of life.

On Lori's first day working in the art department, I started drafting yet another introduction to "Karoshi," a story that was still forming in my head. Whenever I was feeling nervous about a job, I would write about how my previous job had turned to shit and it made me hopeful that it wouldn't end the same way twice. I would usually write a few paragraphs, e-mail them to myself and the anxiety would wash over me. When I got home and read the e-mail again, I would laugh about how I had been so nervous about nothing. The intro I wrote at the *Guardian* ended up being the one I eventually used for the story and when I got home and re-read it, it didn't make me laugh, it made me realize that it was going to end badly and end soon. No matter which way I went. Damned if I do and damned if I don't.

When Mirissa finally came back from her break, she wanted her job back, but she no longer wanted to work on Saturday. The way Victor explained it to me was that the position I held now required a full shift on Saturdays. I reminded him that he had promised me before I took Mirissa's job that he wasn't going to ask me to work on Saturday and then he just blinked and denied it. I was completely flummoxed. He just lied right to my face. He asked me if I could work on Saturday and I said that I'd have to think about it. Whenever I make a snap decision, I'm always using my worst instincts, so I always buy myself some time. If I had answered him at that second, I probably would have gone off on him in a fit of rage, calling him an asshole and a liar, and accusing him of trying to fuck me over. He said that the new job started in two weeks if I wanted it; if not, he knew that Lori would be overjoyed to take it, including the long Saturday shift.

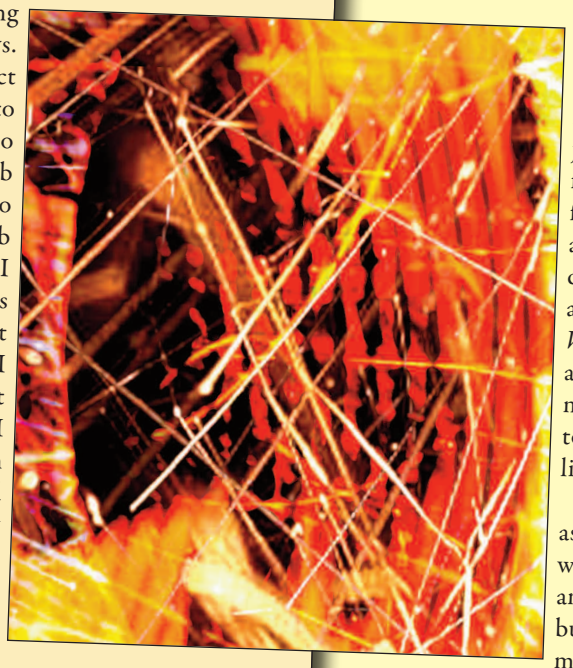
When I got home, I was livid. I said to my wife, "This whole thing is fucking bullshit. Victor knows he told me that I wouldn't have to work Saturdays, I don't want to work Saturdays, we *agreed* to no Saturdays." I ranted like a lunatic for a day and a half. I just kept thinking that the only thing that made me happy was being with my wife and if I had to work Saturdays, I knew it would eventually push us apart. It also meant that I could never go away for a weekend trip and that I would only get to spend one day a week with my wife.

**Money can't buy happiness, but it does create circumstances where happiness is more likely to occur. –Jøsh**

When I returned to the office, I felt like everyone in the whole production department knew what was going on and they were watching me to see if I would cave. Lori was always a busybody and it would not have surprised me if she was already telling people that she was about to take my job. I really felt like a dead man walking but I would not let them know that they beat me. In the same way that I told them to fuck off when they offered me a shitty job for little money, I felt like if I said yes to Saturdays, it would be the first of a thousand little deaths. Then I would be the guy who always had to stay until the end of the shift. I would be the guy you could just dump shit on because there would never be repercussions. I would be known as the guy who took the assfucking like a punk in prison. That's just not me, bro.

I was so tense the whole next day that I couldn't concentrate on my work at all. I wanted to take Victor aside and make my case. I wanted to tell him that he should make Lori work the Saturday as her way to eventually get into the art department. I wanted to call him a fucking asshole liar who was trying to ruin my marriage. Instead, I sat there quietly and pretended to work until Lori finally left me and Victor alone. He could tell that I was upset and he asked, "Are you tweaked about something?" I said that I was 'tweaked' and then he told me to take a seat next to his desk to talk about it.

I said that the reason I was so upset was that when he offered me Mirissa's job I had accepted it with the understanding that I would not be asked to work Saturdays. Now he was changing the terms after the fact and I thought it was really wrong to do that to me. He said that he had never promised me no Saturdays, but even if he had, that's what the job required now. He said if they were looking to fill the job, they would advertise that the job included Saturdays. If that I wanted the job, I could skip all that and just have it, no questions asked, no interview. I told him that I thought it was ridiculous to interview for a job that I was already doing. Then I asked why I couldn't just keep the job I had. He said that the job I had no longer existed, but that a new position was opening up. I looked him right in the eye and said, "What's the difference between the new job and the old job?" He started to tell me and I interrupted, "Besides the Saturday shift." He just smiled at me.



"The job that you have is Editorial Page Designer, the new job is Associate Art Director."

"So, it's Saturdays and a bullshit title, right?" He didn't answer.

"Do you want the job or not, Josh?"

"I want the job I have," I said. I realized that there was no talking about it. It was over for me. I was done. So I finally said what I wanted to say, "Victor, you have been very cool to me since I started here. I like the work and I am good at it. I come on time, I do exactly what I am supposed to, I am easy to work with and no one ever has to check my work. You are putting me in a position where I have no choice. I can't work on Saturdays. I just can't do it because I know that's how it starts. If you can't find a place for me in the art department that doesn't involve leaving my wife at home by herself all day Saturday, then I guess I'm done."

"I'm really sorry to hear that," he lied. "Maybe we could use you to fill in for someone in the future," he lied again. In my head, something clicked. Some may say the wheels of paranoia, some may say my logical brain finally parsed the last bit of evidence to complete the story. When I was still green at the *Guardian*, Victor had told me that each department had a budget and as head of the art department, he was in charge of the budget. Since Lori was coming from production, she would not be given a raise to my salary, she would do my job for half what I was making. If there was money left over, it was Victor's. Was it really that cynical? He was squeezing me out to keep a few bucks in his budget? Or maybe it was even simpler. He was being loyal to Mirissa, who had been there for a long time. She had earned seniority and if she didn't want to do Saturdays, he had to find someone who would. If it wasn't me, it would have to be Lori. She would be thrilled to work Saturdays, even if it took all day. Hell, she probably would have worked Sundays for free.

A week and a half later it was finally my last day at the *Guardian*. Everyone knew that Mirissa was coming back and that Lori was taking my job. One of my close friends in production told me that Lori was a hero to the rest of them because she was the first one to make the leap from doing ads to editorial. It's not exactly like going from labor to management, but when you are in the gutter, even the curb is a step up. My last day was uneventful. I was glad that there was no cake and no phony attempts to stay in touch with me. I finished my shift, turned in my time sheet and walked out. At the end of the day, only one thing mattered. Once again, I was out of a job and would have to go out and find another one. I won't even be a footnote in the *Guardian*'s history and that's fine with me. In 2010 I discovered that Victor is still recording and working as a freelance designer for *Wired* while Mirissa is now Art Director at the *Guardian*. My involvement was more than ten years ago and it's nice to know that I have moved on in my life. Really, no hard feelings, Victor.

As a reality check, I just randomly asked my wife, "Do you remember why I left the *Guardian*?" and without any hesitation she said, "They did a bullshit bait-and-switch on you to make you work on Saturday, right?" Yes, exactly right. If she did a zine, it would be five pages, mostly curses. It took her just one sentence to tell the story that took me three pages to tell.

Over the next few months I collected unemployment and returned to the eBay mines, selling stuff that did have value, like my *MST3K* lunch box that fetched more than $200. I told myself that while I didn't have a job, my job was finding a job. The problem was that I was so bad at finding a job that I did the unthinkable: I decided to go to a temp agency. I tried to find one that could find me work as a graphic designer, or an editor, or a combination of the two.

There was one creative agency that I had always heard about called Aquent that specifically advertised jobs that I knew I could get. I figured if I registered with them, maybe they could find me a cool job, or maybe at least I could try a job on for size to see if it suited me. I thought I'd be more successful if I was pre-qualified based on my skills and then given jobs, rather than evaluated for a job based on my personality in a job interview.



***The thing is, Bob, it's not that I'm lazy, it's that I just don't care. - Peter Gibbons in Office Space***

When I finally applied to Aquent, the ability to submit my resume online and avoid an uncomfortable phone conversation was a great relief for a guy like me. I think I used to be more socially awkward in these situations but now I am overconfident, if anything. I was even more relieved when a perky woman called me and said that they wanted me to come down and take their computer test. They wanted to make sure I could use the software on my resume. I aced their Quark test and even corrected two errors that they didn't catch. A week later, they found me a job at a "creative agency" down in the SOMA district.

The agency produced printed materials for various clients including ads, manuals, instructions and shit like that. My boss was named Patrick and he was another weird gay guy who took way too much of an interest in me. He looked a lot like Pat Kiernan, who is on the local station NY1, but also hosted a few game shows including the *World Series of Pop Culture*. My first assignment was to design and assemble a new white paper for Intel. Patrick gave me Intel's style guide and an old white paper for reference. He then showed me where the text and images were on the server and let me get to work.

I have learned over the course of my shitty career that you need to adjust your approach for each situation. If you are facing a tight deadline, you have to be fast and accurate. If your paycheck ends as soon as the job is complete, pace yourself and do it right. If you are trying to impress one person, I tend to go for quality, but if it's for a group of people, I tend to push out quantity. This was a freelance assignment, so I wanted to impress them so that they would want to keep me. I know that Aquent was paying me $25 an hour but that Patrick was paying Aquent a finder's fee and $50 an hour. In my mind, it meant that it was not only possible, but likely, that if I could have negotiated a deal directly with Patrick, I could have gotten the $50 an hour all to myself. Aquent is aware of this and makes all clients and freelancers sign a contract stating that I am their ho and they are my pimps in perpetuity. Even if I left Aquent and then applied for a job there, they were required to turn me down, so that was never a viable option for me.

Within the limits of the relationship, I did my best to produce excellent work. I always got dressed up, came early, took a short lunch, never made personal phone calls and avoided getting involved in the office politics. After the Intel project, I worked on an annual report for Morgan Stanley. I mention them because I had to read their ridiculously long style guide before I could even start on the project. Their corporate logo is just their name with a small blue triangle that points toward the upper right hand corner, above the "n" in Morgan. They call it their "wordmark" and spent a few pages of the manual explaining why the wordmark was so important and why it was necessary that it always appear in the correct color (Morgan was always 100 percent black, Stanley was 60 percent black and the blue triangle was a specific Pantone color). The manual gave a dozen examples to illustrate how even the slightest change in any element could undo all of the brilliant things the wordmark did. It points up and forward because Morgan Stanley keeps you moving up and forward. There was a whole ridiculous rationale behind every aspect of their logo and Patrick treated it like it was the *Koran*. Even questioning the logic behind it is an affront to Allah. This wordmark was more important than good design, grammar or spelling. It was everything. It led me to believe that a great deal of money had been spent on that fucking triangle. Nike spent just $35 to get the Swoosh symbol and clearly the geniuses at Morgan Stanley had spent too much time and money to come up with that stupid triangle. It was not hard to figure out what they wanted so I just created one perfect wordmark and then pasted it everywhere that it was needed.

Just a few years after I worked on these projects, Morgan Stanley dropped the triangle because, as they put it, "After a period of corporate turmoil, this is a regrounding in Morgan Stanley's 'the quiet company' heritage, refocusing on performance rather than self-promotion (which the logo's triangle was felt to represent)." In my research, I also found the site mswordmark.com which is called the Morgan Stanley Wordmark Project and Global Signage Survey. On the site, you can register, log in and then give your thoughts on changes to the wordmark. I wonder how much more money they pissed away on that project, and for what?

Patrick was a stickler for the minor details and marked up everything I gave him for the first few weeks I was there. Everyone I have ever worked for has always told me that I am very meticulous in my work and this zine is a perfect example of that. It felt unnatural to do things his way; after all, I was supposed to be in a creative position. For the kind of work that they had me doing, they should have created working templates and then had lower-skilled (and cheaper) people flowing in the copy and pictures, but I will take more money to do easier work any time.

He also had this weird move where he would point to something and the tip of his pointer finger would bend backward like it was going to break off. I don't think he ever noticed, but it really creeped me out. He also had an annoying habit of referring to a URL as an "earl." There are many acronyms that become words, but URL is pronounced, "U-R-L," not "earl." Just thinking about it gives me douche chills and I can remember so many times that he would bend his finger backward while pointing to a web address and then whisper, "Can you make this 'earl' Intel Blue, please?"

I worked there for a few months, longer than the original assignment. The people in the office seemed to like me, but again, I tend to keep to myself and not get involved in after-work drinking or socializing. I will never be a workaholic because I know that life is way too short to kill yourself trying to accomplish something for someone else, but that's life. I want all of my accomplishments to be mine and mine alone.

Morgan Stanley's wordmark.

When I got my very last assignment from Patrick, he let me do some creative things with the design and it was good for my morale to be trusted. Of course he rejected my ideas, but it felt good to at least get them out there.

Aquent was able to place me at a couple of other minor jobs, working for the national opthalmologist's newsletter, designing annual reports for corporations and other menial, meaningless shit. While all this was happening, my wife had left her company because they didn't have enough work to keep her busy. She got a job at a dot-com just south of San Francisco and was working her way up the ranks. At the time, everybody and his brother was getting rich from stock options (even my own brother!). It seemed like every stupid idea was suddenly a web site, and then weeks later it would be acquired by an even larger company. Two things started happening at the same time. My freelance jobs from Aquent started to slow down to a trickle, and a major company was looking to acquire my wife's company. I went back to my job search and my wife waited for the hammer to fall.

A few months later, my wife's company was acquired, she got laid off, she was able to exercise all of her stock options and she got a very generous severance package. They even paid her time-and-a-half to oversee the transition. With the



Always obey your superiors. If you have any. - Mark Twain

start of a decent nest egg, we decided that it was finally time to stop renting and buy a place. Unfortunately, the dot-com boom sent San Francisco real estate way into the stratosphere and we couldn't afford anything. Even the smallest condos in our neighborhood were way out of reach to us. If we were going to buy a place of our own to live, we could never do it while also paying rent. We had a lot of long, sad conversations about what we should do and eventually we decided that we should move back to New York, live with my mom, and save every single penny until we could afford to buy an apartment in Manhattan.

It was sad to say good-bye to San Francisco, but the truth is, I never really felt like it was home. It always felt like I was on vacation. The weather was always nice, the food was good, and I was barely working, just like vacations. If I was ever going to have a career in publishing, or writing, I would have to return to New York City. Free rent would relieve the pressure of having to constantly hustle to make a living and I thought I'd have more luck finding a good job. We sold my Acura (ALL FOUR TIRE!!), hired a mover to take all of our stuff and used miles to book plane tickets for 9/17/01. Our flight was canceled because of 9/11, but we were unable to sell the Honda in time anyway, so we decided to drive it back, since we would need a car when we got there.

Within a week of returning to New York, my wife was re-hired by her former bosses, who had moved to one of the Final Four big accounting firms. She walked in, her old boss said, "Slam dunk, welcome back," made her a very generous offer and we were back in business. A few weeks later, my brother told me that a friend of his knew someone who needed Mac help. I went down there to meet with them thinking that it was just a job interview. It turns out they needed immediate freelance help. I got the gig on the spot and over the next few months, I converted a short-term freelance gig into an actual career, with a good salary and benefits. That's a story for another time. I am already past 13,000 words for this story.

It's only now, at the end of my awesome career, that I realize why it is that almost every job I have ever had has ended with me being fired: I simply refuse to quit. I have always had a good work ethic in the sense that I know what I am supposed to do and I am good at it. I take pride in my work and like being challenged. Motivation has always been an issue, but in the grand scheme of things, I think everyone has issues with motivation from time to time. Unless you get a huge paycheck every week, it's very hard to drag your ass out of bed on Monday morning. For me it was so bad that I used to get depressed every Sunday with what I called "Work Dread." Not anymore. Not at all. I consider myself retired but I will still help out a client if the price is right. Being retired beats the shit out of working any day and if the only issue is occasional boredom, I'll take that over Karoshi any time.

**2011 Update:**

I became Facebook friends with John Kelly (there are dozens of them, so it's not like it would be that easy for you to find him). We exchanged some pleasant e-mails, never discussed my firing and talked about kids and work. He had been working for one of the major sports leagues, but then left to work for a Catholic group and now he's teaching college. As I've said before, he was a real weirdo and once we were FB friends he would tag all these odd photographs as me. If someone looked at my pics, they would incorrectly assume that I had uploaded them, despite the fact that I had not. I would untag myself but he kept on doing it.

To demonstrate just how annoying his behavior was, I uploaded a bunch of random pictures and tagged them as John. He freaked out and immediately untagged himself, but I just kept at it with new pictures, just like he had done to me. After a few in a row, John freaked out and posted on my wall, "Why do you keep tagging me in your pictures???"

I wrote back that he started it and I had no idea why he was doing it to me. He said he had no idea what I was talking about. Then he tagged me in more pictures. I ignored him. He told me that some other people were launching a hush-hush new web site and asked if I would write for them and said that it would help make the site "the talk of the town." He wanted me to include video clips of violence and manly action so I thought it would be cool to write about how to be a coward without looking like one. I'd show clips of Parkour escapes and bad guys who stand behind henchman. He thought the idea was great. That was the last I ever heard of the site.

We had a few friends in common, mostly zine people, but it's cool to see that people you know separately also know each other. John just kept on tagging me as a bullfighter's balls, or the sideburns on a 70s black stud. I retaliated by tagging him as a clown's teeth and a colon cleanser. He confronted me and I repeated that I would stop if he would stop, and again, he denied it. I unfriended him because it's easier than putting him to death. Well, logistically it is, anyway.

James from *POPsmear* now runs a business in LA removing tattoos and he's doing well. He sent me an e-mail years ago asking if he could write something for my zine because he missed doing a zine. I blew him off. See, power does corrupt.

Bob Guccione died and *Penthouse* is dying along with most printed porn. It's impossible to compete with all that unlimited free online porn.

These days I only have to answer to my wife and kids and I am much more suited to this work than any other. I don't like the early hours and sometimes my tiny bosses are tyrants but I can dress any way I like and I don't have to feign interest. I am actually interested in them. Sure, I make less money than I did at a straight 9 to 5 job but you can't put a price on happiness. Well, maybe you can, but I can't.

One day I'll go back to work, perhaps as an English professor, maybe as a full-time writer, but regardless of the circumstance, I'd like to believe that there are no asses for me to suck in the future. It's a good thing my wife is so driven and supportive because despite my massive failure as a worker bee, I still feel like a winner every day that I get to spend with my family.

## Your Earnings Record

| Years You Worked | Your Taxed Social Security Earnings | Your Taxed Medicare Earnings |
|---|---|---|
| 1986 | $ 549 | $ 549 |
| 1987 | 620 | 620 |
| 1988 | 600 | 600 |
| 1989 | 0 | 0 |
| 1990 | 4,230 | 4,230 |
| 1991 | 0 | 0 |
| 1992 | 0 | 0 |
| 1993 | 10,018 | 10,018 |
| 1994 | 8,820 | 8,820 |
| 1995 | 23,040 | 23,040 |
| 1996 | 24,960 | 24,960 |
| 1997 | 3,168 | 3,168 |
| 1998 | 12,618 | 12,618 |
| 1999 | 14,638 | 14,638 |
| 2000 | 0 | 0 |
| 2001 | 5,328 | 5,328 |
| 2002 | 27,830 | 27,830 |
| 2003 | 78,000 | 78,000 |
| 2004 | 87,900 | 104,230 |
| 2005 | 66,605 | 66,605 |
| 2006 | 61,038 | 61,038 |
| 2007 | 59,495 | 59,495 |
| 2008 | 3,325 | 3,325 |
| 2009 | Not yet recorded | |

This statement tells the sad story of my career, which peaked in 2004, the same year I was able to afford to print 4,000 copies of *NegCap* #4. From '05–'07 I cut my schedule down to two days a week.



*Be regular and orderly in your life, so that you may be violent and original in your work. - Gustave Flaubert*

MY BRAIN IS VERY THIRSTY. It's a giant sponge that absorbs information and it always feels parched, so I suck up new information all the time. When I listen to music, I try to parse meaning and analyze subtext. Maybe it's purely out of boredom or an unrecognized need in me to fill the void. There's a common misconception that we use ten percent of our brains, but there's no way I only use ten percent of my brain. I did some research and it turns out the ten percent thing is complete bullshit. They can do CAT scans now and doctors know definitively that we use all of our brains. At least some of us do; I can't speak for you.

That's a pretty heady intro for what is a pretty simple observation that leads to a joke. I listen to a lot of different kinds of music and refuse to lock into a genre or two. I have many moods and my choices in music reflect that. For every angry, hard-edged song I have by DMX or the Revolting Cocks, I also love a dozen acoustic songs by sweet, sensitive bands like Prefab Sprout and Frazier Chorus. I also have a lot of pop stuff that I wouldn't say I'm a big fan of, but it's a part of my personal history. What am I talking about? Hall and Oates. Love them. I don't care if it's not hip or cool to say so, but those guys wrote some great songs that I still enjoy.

I was at the gym and a random song came on that I didn't immediately recognize. It was Rick Springfield's song, "Jessie's Girl," and for some reason, way back in the 80s, Rick was named guitarist of the year by a music magazine. In Australia. I didn't even realize he was Australian, but I immediately equated that win to a Special Olympics medal. When all the competition is retarded, it's not hard to shine. So I listened carefully to the words and tried to figure out what was really being said. By the time he got to the first chorus, I said to myself, "This creep is a fucking stalker! What kind of douche lusts after his best friend's girlfriend, especially since Jessie's never done a damn thing to Rick Springfield." Well, spelling Jesse with an "i" is pretty gay, but he does have a hot girlfriend. Here are the lyrics that open the song:

*Jessie is a friend*
*Yeah, I know he's been a good friend of mine*
*But lately something's changed*
*It ain't hard to define*
*Jessie's got himself a girl*
*And I want to make her mine*

So what we know so far is that Rick Springfield has a good friend named Jessie, but apparently "something's changed" that has altered the dynamic of the friendship. And what is it that has changed? Now, "Jessie's got himself a girl." I have seen a lot of friendships change as a result of a girlfriend's influence, but in this case, it's pretty obvious that the girlfriend isn't the cause of the problems, per se, but rather that her existence threatens the friendship because Rick is obviously not a good friend. He uses his friends as a farm team for new women to date, maybe because he's a creepy douchenozzle who can't seem to get a girl on his own. Do you think Jessie would steal Rick's girl? We can infer that *he* wouldn't because *Jessie is a good friend*, by Rick's admission. Good friends don't steal their friend's girlfriends. Even the goddamn Ten Commandments say that you shouldn't covet your neighbor's wife, even if she is *very hot*. Let's continue:

*And she's watching him with those eyes*
*And she's lovin' him with that body, I just know it!*
*And he's holding her in his arms, late, late at night*

The telling line in here for me is the emphasized, "I just know it!" How does he just know it? Because he is clearly spending a lot of his idle time fantasizing about her naked. He wants that body. He wants to possess her, like a trophy. She has no feelings of her own, she is merely an object that he wishes to steal from his "good friend." When he says "that body," it's obvious that he has broken her down into consumable body parts, like she's an object instead of a person. Rick is the kind of guy that would joke that the useless piece of skin around a vagina is called the woman. You can also tell that Jessie's girl is the object of Rick's obsession for two reasons. First of all, he doesn't even address her by name, she is always just "Jessie's girl." Her raison d'être is just to be a prized possession, which is exactly why Rick wants her. Secondly, the fact that he imagines that Jessie is merely "holding her in his arms, late, late at night" is keeping him up at night. Rick can't think of anything else besides the object of his desire.

*You know I wish that I had Jessie's girl*
*I wish that I had Jessie's girl*
*Why can't I find a woman like that?*

I think it's pretty obvious why Rick can't find a girl: He's a fuckin' creep. He makes it seem like all you need to do to sleep with a woman is "find" her. Jessie's girl is *not lost*. She is not in need of any help, yet here's Rick, wondering why he can't find women like that. Well, you might find a woman like that if you stopped looking for girls *in your friends' arms*! Those girls are taken already.

*I play along with this charade*
*There doesnt seem to be a reason to change*

First of all, charade and change don't even come close to rhyming. Secondly, this alleged "charade" that Rick speaks about so nonchalantly is, in fact, a functioning and healthy relationship that Rick clearly covets. In a charade, you pretend to do something to

fool others, but if it's a charade, and the one person the charade is for is not fooled, then it's not much of a charade, is it? Clearly Rick's emotional issues are getting the best of him. When he says that there doesn't seem to be a reason to change, it is not clear if he is talking about himself or Jessie and his girl, but he does make it clearer in subsequent lines:

*You know I feel so dirty when they start talking cute*
*I wanna tell her that I love her but the point is probably moot*

This is the first time in the entire song that Rick seems to have enough self-awareness to realize that he is clearly transgressing the boundaries of a normal friendship. It is interesting to note that the only time he starts to feel "dirty" for coveting his friend's girl is when they start "talking cute," as Rick puts it. They are not "talking cute" to make Rick uncomfortable, rather they are just enjoying each other's company in a loving relationship. He says that he loves her, yet isn't love borne of a mutual feeling, an outgrowth of attraction and compatibility? Or does he just want to tell her that he loves her because he wants to steal her away? If you were dating someone and their best friend just blurted out that they loved you, wouldn't you be freaked out? I know that I would be, but I am not even remotely attracted to Rick Springfield.

*'Cause she's watching him with those eyes*
*And she's lovin him with that body, I just know it!*
*And he's holding her in his arms late, late at night*
*You know I wish that I had Jessie's girl*
*I wish that I had Jessie's girl*
*Why can't I find a woman like that?*

What good stalker doesn't repeat himself often? I think it would be quite possible for him to find a woman like that if only he would look in places besides his friend's house. You will never find a girl for yourself if you only look at other people's relationships. As has often been said, if they will cheat with you, they will cheat on you. Who's to say that once Rick has stolen Jessie's girl away that she won't then turn around and go after one of his friends? Or that he won't decide that he now likes her roommate, or maybe he just plans to steal Jessie's next girlfriend? This made me start to wonder if there really was a Jessie behind all this animosity. I mean, if you were to write a song about stealing your best friend's girl, would you really use his name in your song? You would be risking a justifiable punch in the face and the dissolution of your romantic ambitions, but at least it would be out there on the table. The real-life guy that the song is based on was named Gary, but Rick changed the manly name of his best friend Gary to "Jessie" to further humiliate him, all in an attempt to steal his girlfriend away.

*And I'm lookin' in the mirror all the time*
*Wonderin' what she don't see in me*

Imagine, if you can, Rick looking in the mirror all the time, trying to imagine the thoughts of this girl, who doesn't even have a name. He never names her because her name is completely irrelevant. He's like a spoiled baby who only wants the other kids' toys. I am sure that we have all seen a gorgeous girl dating a schlub of a guy and wondered, "Why him and not me?" I mean, Julia Roberts married Lyle Lovett and while there's no doubt he's got some talent, his greatest talent has got to be hypnotizing women. Julia could have almost any man in the world (not me, though... she's too toothy!) yet she chose to marry a guy who could charitably be called "awkward looking." When we see situations like this, it's only natural to wonder what the attraction is, but Rick knows what the attraction is, and he even says so. Jessie's been a friend, yeah, he's always been a good friend of mine. Being a good friend is a trait that many women will find attractive, but Rick only sees opportunity.

*I've been funny;*
*I've been cool with the lines*
*Ain't that the way*
*love's supposed to be?*
*Tell me, why can't I*
*find a woman like that?*
*You know I wish that*
*I had Jessie's girl*
*I wish that I had Jessie's girl*
*Why can't I find a woman like that?*
*Like Jessie's girl*
*I wish that I had Jessie's girl*
*I want, I want Jessie's girl*



I think Rick has answered his own question. He can't find a girl like Jessie's girl because the only place he is looking is his best friend's arms. If Rick could do the honorable thing and put bros before hos, he might still be friends with Jessie, but I think the fact that Rick wrote a song means that he's pretty committed to stealing his best friend's girl. What if Jessie knew about it? How would Jessie feel? Well, I think I know the answer, because Jessie wrote a rebuttal song.

*You're always dancing down the street / With your suede blue eyes*
*And every new boy that you meet / He doesn't know the real surprise*
*When she's dancing 'neath the starry sky*
*Ooh, she'll make you flip (here she comes again)*
*When she's dancing 'neath the starry sky / I kinda like the way she dips*
*Well she's my best friend's girl / She's my best friend's girl*
*But she used to be mine*

It really makes you feel for Jessie because not only did his former friend steal his girlfriend, but he has to see them together all the time. I am sure that Jessie would eventually realize that she is a cheater, so it's probably for the best that she's gone. The amazing thing to me is that even Jessie doesn't want to name her, almost like it's too painful to speak her name.

Coming Next Time:
John Waite *claims* that he isn't missing you, yet he is writing songs about you to proclaim over and over that he is *not* missing you, at all. Methinks thou doth protest too much, douchebag.

**The 40-Year-Old Virgin**
Steve Carell rides a gay bike, collects things like a nerd and eventually gets laid.

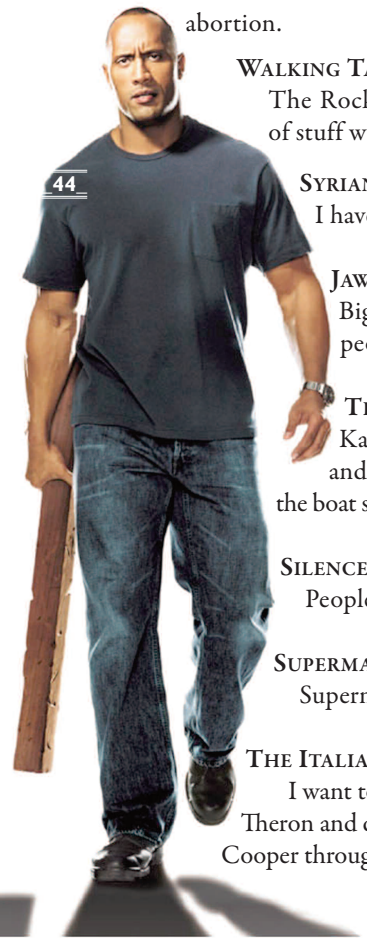
**One Night in Paris**
**(the Paris Hilton porno)**
The only way Paris Hilton looks good to me is with a hard dick in her mouth.

**Open Water**
Fish eat the assholes.

**Mr. Saturday Night**
Billy Crystal gets old and... sucks.

**She's Having a Baby**
Elizabeth McGovern *doesn't* get an abortion.

**Walking Tall**
The Rock beats up a lot of stuff with a big stick.





**Syriana**
I have no fucking idea.

**Jaws**
Big shark eats a few people. Bigger boat?

**Titanic**
Kate shows her tits and Leo drowns. Also, the boat sinks.

**Silence of the Lambs**
People are delicious.

**Superman Returns**
Superman returns.

**The Italian Job**
I want to fuck Charlize Theron and drive a Mini Cooper through the sewers.

**Goodfellas**
Joe Pesci is a murderer, not a clown. Also, coke, hookers and guns are bad.

**Armageddon**
Bruce Willis kills himself on an asteroid and... Ben Affleck sucks.

**Million Dollar Baby**
A chick that looks like a dude beats up other chicks and dies. OK, I never saw this movie but I am pretty sure that's correct.

**An Inconvenient Truth**
I'm going to have to move out of New York City when it's underwater.

**Sin City**
Bruce Willis is good in almost everything, as long as he's playing Bruce Willis.

**Sideways**
Pig Vomit from *Private Parts* gets drunk on wine in California and bags a chick who's way out of his league.

**The Machinist**
Batman runs over a kid with his car, can't sleep, loses a lot of weight and goes nuts.

**Batman Begins**
Batman is a bad motherfucker.

**The Dark Knight**
The Joker is a bad motherfucker.

**Inception**
Chris Nolan is a bad motherfucker.

**Crash**
Even the nice white people totally suck.

**National Treasure**
Nicolas Cage has a hairpiece.

**Wedding Crashers**
Rachel McAdams is insanely fucking hot.

**300**
299 gay guys get killed by even gayer dudes and one fat, mutated dude has axe-arms, which is pretty badass.

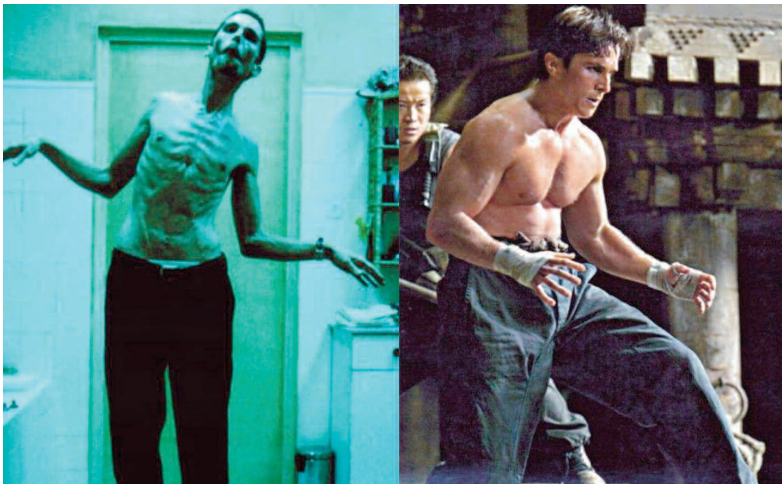
**The Day the Clown Cried**
Holy fucking shit! Did you see that? What the fuck is wrong with Jerry Lewis??

**Anchorman**
Jack Black kills Will Ferrell's dog, which makes Will cry like a prison bitch. Also, Sex Panther is vile and I have smokened many pots while watching this movie.

**I Am Legend**
The poster lied: Will Smith is not the last man on Earth. There's plenty of dudes.

**Grizzly Man**
Nutty gay guy gets eaten by his bear friend while his girlfriend watches. She's dessert.

**Basic Instinct**
Sharon Stone's pussy is blonde.



# HOW TO JEW A DIME OUT OF A NICKEL

## A Public Service By Josh Saitz and Anonymous

YOU CAN MAKE ALL THE ANTI-SEMITIC JOKES YOU LIKE, it really doesn't bother me. I used to work very hard for my money and I have always felt like if I spent it recklessly, I would be negating all of my hard work. My nature dictates that I constantly find new ways to do more with less and get more for less in all transactions. I know this is not an exclusively Jewish trait; it has more to do with having respect for both money and work. At its root, it's all about efficiency.

Since this issue has always been intended as a small oasis of nice in a sea of anger and bile, helping my readers to do more with less not only helps me justify the cover price but also ensures that people that like me will be better competitors in the world. It is survival of the fittest out there and the more good information you have, the more likely it is that you, and your offspring, will succeed. No one taught me any of these techniques or approaches; I have discovered or invented them in the course of my life while in the pursuit of other goals. My anonymous co-author has great ideas but absolutely no desire to be associated with a story with this title. Everyone is allowed to be a big pussy sometimes, no offense intended, Anonymous.

If you have a big road trip planned, trying to find the shortest route is not only wise but it also allows you to drive more efficiently, which saves time, gas and wear on your car. Obviously there's a tipping point at which making that extra effort produces such small gains that the cost outweighs the benefit. There is only one place where Anonymous and I part company—I refuse to get involved with coupons. To me, sitting around with a razor and cutting out a piece of paper, carrying it to the market, picking up the brand specified and handing it to a cashier is not worth 25 cents—my time is too valuable.

I feel the same way about laundry. I used to do my own laundry in the basement of my building. It usually cost me about $11 in quarters for the machines, maybe $4 in detergent, fabric softener and dryer sheets, and three hours to schlep it down, come back to move it from machine to machine, bring it home and then fold it.



Now I make a phone call and have someone come get it, wash it, fold it and bring it back to me for around $30—for the same amount of laundry. If you think about it, by doing it myself, I am essentially paying myself the price difference to do all the work, which at $15 for three hours is just $5 an hour. If someone else came to me and offered me $5 an hour to do their laundry, I would laugh at them. I haven't worked for $5 an hour since I was sixteen.

There is also a clear distinction to be made between big items and little items, or what I call the "penny wise, pound foolish" rule. My step-mother is a crazy cunt who should die painfully. She used to make me mental in many ways, but one of the worst was how, when I was a teenager, she was always penny wise and pound foolish. She was constantly renovating our house, spending literally thousands of dollars on contractors, fancy new decorations and the like, but she also wanted me to rinse and re-use cheap, disposable, plastic cups to save money. She also clipped coupons that she expected me to use when I did the family's grocery shopping. I paid her back by using her blank checks to overpay for the groceries and then I would pocket the difference. Don't get the wrong idea, she didn't want us to re-use cups out of concern for the environment, she was a classic *chazzer* (noun, Yiddish: a pig or a glutton) in that she always drove around in a huge SUV by herself, getting eight miles to the gallon, and she liked to drive around just to relax. As I said, she was a rancid cunt.

I know the whole world has its hand in my pocket. Like most people, I have had a job and made a salary. Before I ever saw the money, I lost about a third of it to various agencies, the federal and state governments, Social Security, etc. Then, after I get the remaining two-thirds, I get hit again with sales tax on everything I buy. Then I get jacked on all my monthly bills, whether it's FCC charges on my cable bill or access charges with my broadband. As the owner of a co-op, I have to pay common charges to the building, which includes the building's property tax, interest on the building's mortgage and so on. It seems endless and the more you earn, the more people have their fucking hands in your pockets. You have to be resourceful if you want to get ahead and I am living proof of that.

When I moved back to New York in 2001, my wife and I had a nice chunk of change in savings but we were both unemployed. After a year of living with my mom to save every penny, we bought our first apartment, a very modest one bedroom in Manhattan. Two years later, we sold it and rolled all of the proceeds into a very nice two-bedroom so our son could have his own room. When we sell it, we will make money again, and in the meantime, we'll have a place we can go to get away from it all. It's not magic or rocket surgery. I know it doesn't work for everyone, granted. To put it another way, owning a place usually costs less than renting a comparable place and I get to build equity just by holding onto it a little longer. Would you rather work for years and save up as much as you possibly can by denying yourself every possible pleasure, or would you rather pour every extra dollar into a home that may make more money than you will by working? Personally, if I can own something that makes more money than I do, I want to own as many of those things as possible.

Obviously, real estate everywhere in the country is not like the real estate market in Manhattan. In addition, I live a more ascetic life than most, but I have everything that I need and I certainly make sure that I enjoy life in the moment. There are certain

things that I have cut out of my life in order to save money, but there's no point in living frugally if you are miserable. This does not mean you can spend your way to happiness, because you can't, but having a pile of money only makes Monty Burns happy. To me, buying a beer in a bar for $8 is insane and spending $13 for a movie means that I only go to movies that I know are going to be good.

The first major thing you can do to Jew a dime out of your nickel is to get a credit card that gives you something back. If you're using a card (especially one with an annual fee) that gives you nothing but interest charges, you are throwing money away. My personal choice, based on extensive research, is the Starwood American Express card, but I know it's not for everyone. In terms of the actual cash value for the points you earn, it's by far the best deal. Others may find a card that earns airline miles, cash towards a car, or even just straight cash back. Do your own research (try bankrate.com) and find what works for you. Once you have that card, use it for everything so you maximize your earnings. I understand that sometimes a purchase is only a few bucks and it's easier to throw cash on the counter and walk away, but if you think about it, you'll realize that when you spend cash, you are leaving money on the table.

Also, never, ever spend more than you can afford to pay off every single month. This is by far the most effective way to keep your spending in check because if you pay off your card every month, you can't spend money that you don't have. Every single time you don't pay your credit card off in full, you pay interest. Unless the card has a very low rate (below five percent, but that's usually a promotional rate that won't last very long), you are paying a lot for the privilege of hanging on to your money for a little longer. If you think about it, every time you don't pay something off on your credit card, you are paying more for that item. If you leave $1,000 worth of clothes on your card, in a month you may end up paying $1,050 for the same clothes. It's the exact opposite of buying things on sale. If you have ever bought things on credit because they were on sale, unless you paid them off in full, you not only didn't get the sale price, but you probably ended up paying more than full price.

If you are ever asked to purchase something for your company on your credit card for reimbursement, jump all over it. Just as a simple example, I volunteered to place the company's orders from Staples. When I placed the order, I went through a web portal called Upromise (I'm not sure if it's "you-promise" or "up-romise") which gives cash back into your kid's college savings account. I placed the order using my personal store loyalty card and my Amex, so I was able to cash in on every purchase three different ways: Upromise gave me free cash for college, the store itself gave me rewards that I could use for personal purchases, *and* my credit card gave me points for the purchase. The best part is that the company gave me all the money back, so just by being clever I am able to not only make my own dollars go further, I am also able to capitalize on the spending of others.

When you do cash in these rewards, make sure that you get the most bang for your buck. For example, if you are going to get an airline ticket with your points, don't waste it on a short flight. If a ticket can be had for 25,000 miles, you want to make sure that the miles are being redeemed for their maximum value. I find that a cross-country trip, or a particularly expensive route, is best. In addition, it's wise to



take advantage of temporary reduced-points awards when they are made available. As an example, I went to Florence, Italy for my friend Garett's wedding. I looked into buying the tickets and they were around $700 for a direct flight. My airline of choice didn't have any direct flights and because of the dates, the flight out would happen at the very end of the "peak" season, which meant that instead of the normal 40,000 miles for a ticket to Italy, it would cost 60,000 miles. If you do the math (and I always do), it was smarter to buy the tickets, earn new miles and save the points for a future date. It's a shame when you save up thousands of points and then piss them away wantonly out of laziness. If you treat points or miles like valuable currency, you will have more respect for everything you buy.

One of the many reasons I personally prefer the Starwood card is that they have a lot of deals where you can get a great hotel room for a combination of points and cash. When I went to Italy for the wedding, Starwood had a deal where you could stay for eight nights at any combination of their best properties for only 40,000 points. Each of these hotels normally cost €500 a night, which made it one of the best deals in history. For 40,000 points, instead of cashing in for a $700 airline ticket, we got more then €4K worth of hotels, which at the time was worth more than $5K. In addition to all that, if you stay often enough at Starwood properties (Sheraton, W, Westin, Four Points and others) they bump you up to elite status and then every dollar you spend earns double or even triple points.

A lot of these tips will work well for people who already have good credit, but I did a Venn diagram showing *NegCap* readers and people with good credit and it's almost a total overlap. If you have good credit, you can get the whites-only treatment from your credit card very easily. The credit card companies prefer if you maintain a balance and make the minimum payments forever but you don't want to live like the Government, do you? I also carry a MasterCard that earns airline points and while the exchange rate is not as good as Amex, not everyone accepts Amex. The problem with this card is twofold: When you earn miles, they charge an annual fee and, secondly, they also tend to have higher interest rates than comparable cards. These two issues can be resolved easily with a phone call. Every time I get the annual fee, I call them and complain, they apologize and waive the fee. I just earned $55 for making a single phone call. Now *that* is a good use of my time. The other day I decided I was sick of this card, so I called to cancel. I was immediately transferred from Bangalore back to the U.S. where a friendly account executive immediately offered me 7,500 miles to keep the card. I told him I was canceling because I had better offers and I was sick of the annual fee. He waived the fee, even though it wouldn't hit my statement for months *and* threw in the miles. I still might call and cancel in a few months because Anonymous claims that the operators are authorized to give you up to 20,000 miles for breaking their balls. That's almost a free ticket, so it's worth the hassle.

There is a legendary true story that I read about many years ago. Healthy Choice was offering 500 miles for ten bar codes from any of their products, or 1,000 if they were purchased and redeemed quickly. David Phillips of CA, discovered that the single-serve pudding cups were actually much cheaper than buying the miles directly, so he bought hundreds of thousands of them. When he was running out of time to cash in, he made a deal with a food bank, saying that if they gave him the bar codes, they could

keep all of the pudding. He ended up spending just $3,150 for 1.2 million miles *and* he got to write off the cost of the pudding because he donated it. Because he had acquired more than a million miles in a single year, he earned Gold status on American Airlines for life, which gives him a special reservation number, priority boarding, upgrades and bonus miles. It worked out for everyone: The company got free publicity, David got all of those miles and the food bank got the free food. That guy is my hero. The official Wikipedia version says that this story was a plot point in the Adam Sandler film *Punch-Drunk Love*, but I am definitely not a Sandler fan and I think PT Anderson is an overrated director.

A friend of mine recently told me about a way he'd devised to earn miles on his credit card that was easy, legal and quite lucrative. A company was selling special gold coins at face value with free shipping. I assume they get the coins at a lower price because otherwise I don't see how *they* make money. He then deposits those coins in his account, does a free online transfer to the credit card to pay the bill, and pockets as many free miles as he wants. He's a brilliant guy and deserves every penny. It's the definition of free money.

When you start to think of every way to maximize the benefit of your purchases, you start to become streamlined and more efficient. Humans marvel at the shark's graceful lines and sleek design and rightly so. Over the course of millions of years, only the leanest and swiftest sharks have survived to reproduce. Obviously, Intelligent Design has made sharks very effective hunters and you can be just as effective as the shark, or perhaps even Yahweh Himself when it comes to Jewing dimes out of nickels. After all, He invented this, too.

Retail stores and markets offer their own discount and rewards programs. I hate getting junk mail, so I tend to use a fake name when I sign up. Because the discounts and rewards are tied to the card and not the address, I will sometimes give my P.O. Box, but never my real name. I hate carrying the cards so I tend to put them in my wallet only when I know I am going to be shopping at a particular store.

My anonymous friend has a very helpful tip for getting the best deal online. Many sites will offer free shipping if you buy a certain amount of stuff, let's say $100. Most people do this inefficiently, placing multiple orders beneath the free shipping minimum instead of combining orders, thereby increasing the cost of each individual item. Most retailers that have both a web site and a brick-and-mortar store will accept returns to either place. So let's say you want $70 worth of stuff, but don't want to pay $15 for shipping and handling. Instead, just add anything else to your cart in order to get the free shipping. Later, you can return the extra item to the store and they will never charge you for the shipping.

If you ever get a discount code from a retailer that can be used on the web or in the physical store, you should write down the code and use it in both places, effectively doubling the value. If the code is especially valuable, say a BOGO (buy one get one, either free or half off), you can easily find ways to get the most out of it. One time Anonymous had a buy one, get the second half off code and he was told that he could only use it once per order. Since the shipping was free, he just broke his order into two separate ones, used the code twice and saved even more.



When I decided to get fancy new bedding from Restoration Hardware (to replace the old, mismatched hand-me-downs I'd been using for years) the total retail price for the set was almost $1,000, which is way more than I wanted to spend. I searched eBay, hoping that perhaps I could piece together all the parts I needed and only pay the full retail price for whatever I couldn't find. I saw most of the set that I wanted on eBay, but unfortunately it was king size, not queen size, like my bed. I had the brilliant idea to make a bid for the king size sheets and then return them for store credit. I called Restoration Hardware and they said that if I had all the items in the eBay listing that I saw, it would get me a store credit of almost $700—and the bidding was stalled around $250. I downloaded a free sniping program (which automagically logs in to eBay as you and puts in your maximum bid at the last possible second so that no one else can re-bid), put in that I would pay no more than $500 for the entire set, and then waited for the auction to end so my app could snipe it. A few days later, I got almost the entire set for a total of $410 and saved myself almost $300. Then I took the lot down to the store and exchanged them all for the queen size. At the end of the day, I paid less than $500 for everything I wanted, which is half off the actual retail price, and it was all new, too.

One of the best things you can do to save money is to take full advantage of everything your job offers. Now I know that reading zines and having a corporate job are often mutually exclusive, but you could do what I did—marry someone smart who has a corporate job. At my wife's job, the benefits are astonishing. Five weeks paid vacation to start, 401(k) matching, Flex Spending for health care, child care and transportation, ESPP (which stands for Employee Stock Purchase Plan), parking reimbursement and even an expense account for lunches out and travel. Her Blackberry was free and she has never seen a bill. All of this is before I even get to finding other creative ways to offload expenses onto the job.

Let me briefly explain how these things work because I know it's not common knowledge. Let's say that you make $1,000 a week and that your tax rate is 30 percent, just to use nice, round numbers. Every grubby little cocksucker wants a piece of that grand, so you want to get as much of it off the table as possible before the tax man comes and takes his slice. I am no CPA or tax attorney, but I know money, and I will have my wife, who is a CPA, vet this for accuracy. With 401(k) matching, if you put $100 a week in your 401(k), the company will match your contribution, so they are giving you free money just for saving. Let's say they match 25 percent, that means for every $100 you save, you are actually saving an additional $25 that the company kicks in, plus now the gubmint can only tax the remaining $900. The thing is, if you do nothing at all, then the cocksuckers take 30 percent of that $100, so the reality is, choosing not to put it in your 401(k) means you are giving away $30 instead of keeping it for yourself and letting it earn money for you.

Flex Spending can be tricky because it's usually a use-it-or-lose-it situation. My wife is allowed to set aside a certain amount of each paycheck that goes into her Flex Spending account. Since this money is always pre-tax and is not taxed when you get it out, think of it as a 30 percent discount on anything you buy from this account. The idea is that you set aside money in advance for health care, child care and transportation. Let's say we allocate $1,000 over the course of a year into the Flex Spending account. A tiny portion of each

check goes into this account and whenever we spend any money on anything related to health care (prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, co-pays, etc.), we submit receipts by mail and then get reimbursed from the pre-tax money. It's very important to exhaust this account by the end of the year because if you don't, you won't get the money back. For transportation, the same rules apply. Every month she gets a debit card which can be used to buy a pass for the subways, buses and trains. She can even buy a card for me, spreading the benefits even further.

You can also use Flex Spending to give yourself an interest-free loan and it works like this: My son goes to preschool and my wife's company offers Flex Spending for child-care. Let's say we decide in January to set aside $5K over the course of a year for child-care Flex Spending and let's also say the school costs $1K per month. We pay $1K for January, submit the bill to Flex Spending for reimbursement and immediately get back the full $1K. The thing is, they are going to take out the whole $5K over the course of the year. At the cost of tuition, I will burn through the entire $5K by May but the company won't actually take the full $5K from her until the very last check in December, so we get to buy now, keep the money, and have it deducted from her check (pre-tax) over the course of a year. These different programs usually don't cost anything to join, so if you are on top of your finances, you should be able to plan reasonably well.

Not everyone gets access to an ESPP, but if you are ever offered one, put in the maximum. In my experience, ESPP is after-tax, so there is no immediate tax benefit, but there is another great benefit. You decide how much you want to contribute before the beginning of the year. During every six-month period, they take the money directly out of your check. At the end of each period, they use your contributions to buy the company's stock at the price that it was at the very beginning of the period (January) or the end of the period (June), depending on which price is lower. So let's say the stock was $10 per share in January and $12 in June, which may be a stretch, but I am trying to use round numbers to keep it simple. In June, they take your entire accumulated contribution and buy the stock, but here's the key part: They give you some kind of discount, usually 15 percent. If you put away $1,000 over the six-month period, you could then buy that much of the stock at $8.50 per share (15 percent off the lower $10 per share price) and then immediately dump it for $12. No matter what you do, you will always make at least the 15 percent. If there was ever a bank that paid 15 percent interest in six months, everyone would bank there. To not contribute means that once again you are throwing money away.

Many companies encourage employees to take potential clients out to a nice lunch and allow you to expense it. At my wife's job, if a company is being sued for $50 million, they hire my wife and her wizardry can knock that number down to $2 million, no one really cares if she spends $300 on a fancy lunch or $500 on a rental car because it's what they call "below the threshold of materiality," or as I call it, "trying to Jew a penny out of a dollar," i.e., too small an amount to even care about.

Another way my wife can earn more money just by doing her job is by taking part in CHIP, which stands for Charge Hour Incentive Program. The idea is that every employee has a target number of



hours that they are expected to bill on a monthly basis. For example, let's say my wife has to bill 70 percent of her work time to a client, which works out to 32 hours per week. For every single hour billed beyond that 32 hours per week, she will get paid a substantial hourly rate, in addition to her salary, as a CHIP bonus.

The higher up that she goes in the company's hierarchy, the lower her required billing percentage and the higher the amount she gets per hour. This is how the rich get richer, in case you are keeping track. So if she's working crazy hours, like 12 hours a day for weeks on end, she knows at the end of that period of suffering there will be something extra in her paycheck which makes it all seem perfectly reasonable. If there is a big project, it's easy to make extra money and if you really need some cash, there's always some shit job that no one wants where you can bang the code (their inside term for billing clients) all day and night, and you can put in those extra hours from home or on weekends.

Of course, ever since the Great Depression of 2008 began, many of these programs have changed, dramatically. My wife's firm no longer offers ESPP and they have toughened up the rules for CHIP so that it's calculated quarterly, making it more daunting to make extra money that way. I won't be shocked if they stop the 401(k) matching and then make cuts in other areas, but her job is quite safe and her industry thrives regardless of the economy.

My family lives in Manhattan, so we take public transportation or walk everywhere. When we needed a car, we rented from Hertz. I'm not saying that Hertz has the best prices or the coolest cars because I don't know if that's true. I just know that when my wife started renting cars for work, a co-worker showed her the one true path. He is a member of the Hertz gold program (all of the rental companies have something similar), but the thing that is so awesome about the Hertz program is that you never have to wait in line to get a car. When you arrive, there is a board on the wall with people's names on it. Next to your name is a parking spot number. Just head out to the car. The keys are already in it, so just load it up and go. You spend thirty seconds going over your paperwork at the exit and that's it. There are other perks, like even if you don't have a reservation, and there are thirty non-gold members standing there *with* reservations, you can just skip the line and you will always get the first available car. In addition to all that, this friend told my wife that the company would pay for her gold membership, essentially getting us a personal discount on the company's dime, which is always sweet.

In 2008 my wife put together a spreadsheet showing how much we had spent on rental cars over the past six months versus what it would cost us to own and maintain our own car. Once we looked at the numbers, we decided to buy a car and we have not regretted it.

There is a nice waterpark out on Long Island that the kids love and it's not easy to find cheap activities that the whole family can enjoy. We bought season passes online that we were able to print at home. Every time we went to the park, we would give them this paper that had a bar code and they scanned it before granting us admission. Every time we used the paper they told us to trade the paper for a plastic admission card but we could never be bothered. After driving out there, parking and then waiting to get in, the last thing I wanted to do was make my kids stand around while I traded my paper for a plastic card. Towards the end of the summer season, they offered a great deal: buy a season pass for the current year and it

would also be good for the following year. Since we had never traded in our paper pass all summer long, when we finally did, they gave us a season pass good for two years. Lying about the younger kid's age to get him in for free, plus the two-year passes, means that we can spend a lot more time in the water and a lot less time working to make money to pay the admission price.

There are also less ethical but often rewarding ways to shift some of your expenses to the company. If you're allowed to make purchases on behalf of the company you can reap the benefit of the spending for free. Let's say you need a new printer for your office and the boss says, "Buy one yourself and expense it." First off, always pay with your miles card. If you shop around, you can often find a deal where the printer comes with a mail-in rebate and you can keep that your little secret.

Anonymous has mastered getting the big score but it takes more chutzpah than I possess. Anonymous was once asked to buy a new computer for his employer and found an offer for a free printer with the purchase of the computer. He got the printer, the company got the computer they wanted and since the printer was free, no harm, no foul. It's a slippery slope from this kind of low-level weaseling to full-blown embezzlement, but neither I nor Anonymous have ever had access to a company's bank accounts, which is probably a good thing. Anonymous has slipped pretty close, like the time he was asked to buy a lot of electronic equipment for a client. He called around and convinced a store to give a substantial volume discount, but he had the cojones to offer to pay full price if they would throw in a few free iPods for him and his co-workers. They said they couldn't, but he brazenly decided to buy them anyway. A bit of Photoshop magic removed the extra iPods from the invoice, adjusted the price of the other items to compensate and when all the totals add up, you're golden. Besides, most employers don't have the kind of weasel minds that Anonymous and I do, so it's easy to think of things they could never think of themselves.

When you ask someone the best way to save money, they often repeat shopworn advice such as, "cancel the cable and stop going to Starbucks." Personally, I don't think I would be very happy without cable and I know that Anonymous has personally given thousands of dollars to Starbucks over the years, but I have a helpful suggestion for Jewing dimes there, too. Anonymous figured out that instead of ordering a latte, you order a no-water Americano and then use the free milk to make your own latte. To me, this is a perfectly fine way to save a little money that will add up over time. But my best advice is for you to make your own fucking coffee at home.

As a gift I got a machine called a SodaStream, which carbonates tap water. Instead of buying cases of bottled seltzer, paying for the deposit, and having to carry that shit upstairs, I re-use the bottles they provide, fill it with filtered tap and then carbonate to my taste. They also offer dozens of popular soda flavors that you can add to the seltzer to make your own flavored soda, and none of them are made with high-fructose corn syrup, which we all know is evil and very bad for you. I still love to drink lime Perrier, which probably comes across the Atlantic in a huge cargo ship, is unloaded by giant machines, refrigerated and then delivered to my apartment by a man with a truck. And sometimes I can't even finish them. These little glass bottles travel thousands of miles just to quench my thirst and



once opened, they have a shelf life of less than half an hour. I don't care, I love that shit. I could drink it all day.

When the motor in my son's swing broke after three months, I immediately contacted the manufacturer to get it replaced. They said they just needed the serial number, which was on the underside of the tray. The problem was that the kid hated the tray, so I threw it out the day after I got the swing. No serial number means I get no free replacement motor. But I would not be beaten. I searched for the exact same swing on eBay, e-mailed three different sellers and asked them what the serial number of their swing was because I "had heard there was a product recall." Just two days later, I had three different serial numbers. One of them had to work. And it did. I got the new motor. Free. That's like Jewing a quarter out of a nickel.

Other people have very ugly names to describe the way I behave but I prefer to think of myself as a weasel. As a matter of evolution, I think it's a natural advantage to be a weasel, so when I pass the trait along, I would predict that my offspring will be more successful as biological entities than their competition. Like the shark getting more and more streamlined, the more I weasel, the more I feel that I am getting sleeker and more efficient, and being more efficient at everything is the goal of my life. I expect that by the time I'm sixty I will be able to will things into existence and move things with my mind. I mean, imagine the first animal that got a decent-sized pair of horns. That guy was probably pretty badass and started pushing all the other animals around. This presumes that you believe in the *theory* of evolution and *theories* cannot be proven.

There's a bird that actually goes into other nests, knocks out the eggs and dumps its own eggs, tricking some other ho into raising its young. If a human being did that to another one, we'd call it foster care, but the nerds call it "obligate brood parasitism," because they're dicks. But imagine if what you did was go into the hospital, break into the nursery, kill some stranger's baby and then leave your own baby in its place for them to raise. How would your offspring, who had been raised by different parents, know that it was supposed to do that to other people later, that its very success depended on its ability to weasel a stranger into raising *its* young?

I come by my weasel tendencies honestly because my mother is the biggest weasel I've ever met and I mean that as a compliment. We are both like this for a reason. She didn't teach me any of it, I honestly feel like it's in my bones, in my lungs, in the seam of my choad. I can't help it. Whenever I am confronted with a new scenario, my brain immediately begins to analyze the best way to extract the most value for the least amount of effort until I find that sweet spot where I get maximum benefit for a minimal effort.

I realize that some of these techniques involve a lot of work, more work than a normal person will do just to save a few *shekels* [noun: the currency used in Israel]. The truth is, you can always find ways to make your dollar go further if you are willing to use your brain. Most idiots simply throw money at problems to fix them. That can be an effective tool, but your mind can be much more effective. It's always amazing to me how much people will haggle at a garage sale over a broken table then turn around and pay full sticker price on a new car. If you really put your mind to it, you can find all kinds of interesting and innovative ways to Jew a dime out of a nickel, and if you have some that I have not mentioned here, please send them in and I'll run a follow-up column in my next issue.

# Robbing Charity

Even though this is supposed to be the "nice" issue, I know I am not always such a nice person. I can justify everything I've ever done. Whether or not you accept that justification is entirely up to you. I'm buying it and I think I'm pretty good at seeing through everyone's bullshit. I don't give to charity, I don't volunteer my time, I don't care about the poor, the mentally ill or even the hideously deformed. Without them, I would have almost no one to make fun of, besides myself, obviously. I didn't give a nickel to relief efforts after 9/11, nor did I help anyone displaced by the tsunami, Katrina or the earthquake in Haiti. You really think that I care that some dude in Louisiana can't make a living catching edible shrimp in the Gulf?

When I was kid, my dad always made me watch the Jerry Lewis Telethon over Labor Day weekend. We would have people over to swim, barbecue and hang out. My dad told me, my brother and my younger sister that for every lap we swam in the pool, he would donate a dollar to Jerry Lewis. I always found Jerry to be the ultimate creep, parading cripples around to elicit sympathy and money (see "The Greatest Movies You've Never Seen" on page 12). I never liked him as a person and I found his motives very mysterious. To this day, the only movie I have ever seen with Jerry was *The King of Comedy* and I thought that his part involved no acting. They just told him to be his normal, arrogant, asshole self, and that's what he did.



I asked my father why Jerry started the Telethon in the first place and he said that Jerry would not reveal his reasons until there was a cure. I thought that was incredibly fucked up of Jerry and I can't really explain why it bothered me so much. It was almost like he wanted me to pay him to reveal a secret that I really didn't care about, but the fact that it was a mystery did pique* my interest. (*for anyone confused by that word, please see, "Those Damn Homos" coming in *NegCap* #6.)

On those long Labor Day weekends, my dad would take our word for how many laps in the pool we had done and I would always swim as much as I possibly could, until I was exhausted. I would take breaks to eat and to rest, but all three days of that weekend, rain or shine, I would swim laps with my brother and sister in the pool. I never thought my efforts would make even the slightest difference but I thought if enough people did what my father did, one day the disease would be cured and Jerry would come on TV one Labor Day weekend to announce why he had chosen Muscular Dystrophy as his personal pet cause. I wonder sometimes if they already have a cure for MD but are hiding it in order to give Jerry a career. No matter what his reason is, it's bound to be a huge letdown.

Whenever bad things happen, the victims often say that they never thought that it could happen to them, but now they know that it can happen to *anyone.* When I hear that trite statement, I still say that it can't happen to me. I'm never going to get sucked out of my trailer by a tornado because I don't live in a trailer. My father is not going to get kidnapped by Muslim extremists and get beheaded on the Internet because he's already dead. My wife is not going to fuck her personal trainer and leave me to be with him because I am a hot guy. I am never going to overdose on cocaine because I don't do coke. I do everything I can to reduce the likelihood that I will be the victim of some hideous catastrophe and when nothing bad happens to me, I am glad that I made the effort.

I avoid crowded places, I drive as little as possible and I only fly when I have to. Notice that at no time will I say that people who are the victims of circumstance *deserve* what happens to them, even if I feel that way sometimes. No one deserves to have their house sucked into the sea or to get run over by a drunk driver. At the same time, it is everyone's responsibility to take preserving their own life very seriously, not just when it's convenient or when your life is really threatened. If you smoke and get cancer, like my own father, you cannot be surprised. If you drink excessively and get liver disease, don't come to me looking for a new liver. When you go hunting and one of your pals shoots you in the back thinking that you're a deer, well, that is what they call cruel irony, but it is certainly nothing to get upset about. I may be the only person who saw *The Perfect Storm* and was rooting for the sea to swallow those murderous white trash fisherman for their grievous sins against nature. If you take the point of view of the fish, these guys were remoreseless mass murderers and in the end, they get their comeuppance.

Let's get back to why I started this story: to talk about tragedy and charity. Besides all of my generous work on behalf of Muscular Dystrophy as a child, the only other charitable things I've ever done were to donate blood when I was in college and donate used goods to the Salvation Army. I think charity is a great idea in theory and an absolute disaster in practice. I signal my disdain for the pity industry (as I call it) by refusing to contribute to it. I know that as just one individual I have very little political power or influence. The only influence I have on events is the power of the dollar. I vote for things I like by buying them, and I vote against things by shunning them. This may seem overly simplistic, but again, this is what works for me. The reason I am saying these things now is to give you, as a reader, a chance to absorb what I said about how I give to charity and to think better of me for a second before I ruin it, again. I don't care if you love me, but you will respect me. (As a brief aside, this zine is littered with obscure pop-cultural references that make me laugh and work in context, but are not meant seriously. That last line about respecting me is something Tony Soprano said when his nephew Christopher questioned his judgment. I loved it when I first heard it.)

At my college, they were always having blood drives and all through my freshman year I did what I always do when some stranger stops me on the street to ask me to give them something for nothing: I walk the

hell away. When I was a sophomore, broke as fuck and experimenting with drugs, a friend told me that after he donated blood, every drug that he took hit him a lot harder. The next time they stopped me and asked me to donate blood, I said I would be happy to help. I made my appointment, scored some good drugs and did my thing for charity. I didn't do any drugs at all for the week leading up to my donation, not because I gave a shit about the person who was going to get my blood, but because I wanted to get really fucked up after the donation.

My friend was right on the money. I gave blood and then later that day had a few drinks and a few tokes off a bong. I was deeply fucked up and it was really nice. Donating blood was a simple and efficient way for me to make my drugs last longer and feel stronger. If someone else somehow benefitted from my efforts, that was nice, but it made no difference to me at all.

People may think that I am coming across like the biggest asshole in the world, but there must be some people out there who feel the same way that I do and are just too chickenshit to own it, much less write about it. Like most things in life, I have a philosophy when it comes to giving. Whenever you get something for nothing, you are morally obligated to give back at least twice as much. So, if I ever have surgery and I need to get some blood, I will gladly return twice as much as I needed. If there was some natural disaster and the Red Cross gave me some needed supplies, I would probably return it to them tenfold. If a member of my family was ever the recipient of a transplant, I would gladly give my organs upon my death. But so far, I have not needed anything, so I have not given anything.

People might think that I am pushing my luck by writing about these things, but I think that luck has nothing to do with it. If you play the odds like I do, you find that you expose yourself to a lot less bad luck. For example, I just read a sad story about two kids that died in a horrible car crash where they flipped their car, hit a utility pole and then their car broke in half. This may seem like a random thing, but they were drag racing and it was almost 2AM. I would never race in a car and I am in bed by 11PM most nights. I will never get trapped for hours in a gondola on the side of a mountain because I am not getting on one in the first place. I will never freeze to death in the woods by myself because I will never go to the woods by myself in the cold.

There is no doubt that I am a cautious person. I will not get in a car that looks unsafe and I wear my seatbelt reflexively. On my son's first birthday in 2006 I was working with a guy who provided wireless broadband to my office. We had to go up to the roof of the building to adjust and test the dish receiver. When we got to the roof, there was a ladder mounted on the side of the building that was forty feet high, straight up to the ledge where the receiver dish was mounted. I got about four rungs up and I said, "Why do I need to do this? If I fall and die, it will ruin my son's life. His birthday will be the day that I slipped off a ladder and broke my neck, or worse, the day that I died." I immediately stopped, climbed down and went back to my desk.

There is a certain kind of person who calls himself an "adrenaline junkie," and I think that's an accurate term. Adrenaline is not good for you, it makes you tense up your whole body, it heightens all your senses and it blows out your nervous system. If you are addicted to it, then like all other junkies, you end up dead, in jail, or overdosing. Adrenaline junkies are also called extreme athletes, who do crazy shit like surf giant waves or jump out of airplanes. These are also the same kind of people who crave attention for doing stupid shit and David Blaine is one of them. I mention him because he assed up on one of his stupider stunts, trying to hold his breath underwater for nine minutes. That guy clearly has issues because he could make a nice living and achieve even more fame and fortune just convincing people that card tricks are a magic power and not the silly fraud they are.

These days, I am a life junkie. I want to stay alive, healthy and strong for as long as possible. It wasn't always this way. When I was a teenager, I didn't give a shit about my future. I smoked and drank and did every drug I could get my hands on, mixing and matching, all to glorious excess. I can't say that I was meant to survive but I have always had an innate ability to gauge when I am about to go too far. I have crossed that line only a few times, but it was because I was surrounded by people who knew what I was up to and who would do something if I started puking blood and passed out. I remember a few times when I was doing too many drugs, I would start to feel a twinge of pain and I would turn to someone I was with and say, "Hey, I am starting to feel bad, so keep an eye on me in case something happens." I would add, "I took the following drugs, I haven't eaten in a while and I have asthma." The few occasions I gave this speech to my wife, it would turn into a lecture about how selfish and irresponsible I am, but I was usually too fucked up to care. Besides, I really thought I was doing the right thing by giving some kind of warning. If someone that was sitting next to you just keeled over, and they had seen it coming, wouldn't you appreciate the heads-up? I never actually ended up in an emergency room and I have never had a blackout in my life.

I definitely have had moments of my life that were missing when I woke up but I am sure I was having fun at the time. I remember in college once I was drinking jungle juice (Everclear grain alcohol, Hawaiian Punch powder and water, mixed by hand in a garbage can) at a crazy party with a lot of strangers. Someone brought whippets and then there was some weed and coke. I remember doing all of it. I remember there was a girl named Jen the JAP (see "The Dickstein Chronicles" for more on page 16) who was a really hot twat. I clearly remember making out with her on the lawn, I remember going home with her, and then I remember waking up on her floor with a condom on. Like I said before, even when I am insanely fucked up, I know to wear my seatbelt or a condom, or both, depending on the situation.



Those days are long gone and these days I am about as healthy as a person can be. I go to the gym and do both intense cardio and lift weights. I haven't eaten any red meat since 1994 and I stopped eating pork when I saw the movie *Babe*. I'll call myself a fag again, to save you the trouble. I swear, that movie makes me cry every single time I see it, especially when I hear James Cromwell singing "If I Had Words" to Babe. My diet used to be pretty limited but now it's expanding pretty regularly. I only drink water, seltzer and orange juice, though in the past few months I have been enjoying the occasional Japanese beer like Sapporo. I will never eat any processed crap, fast food, exotic animals or anything too spicy. I also don't drink milk or consume any dairy except for mozzarella cheese on pizza and I have not eaten fish since my mom gave me fishsticks as a kid. I make sure to get plenty of sleep, I see a doctor regularly and take vitamins daily.

This brings us back to the original point of this piece, charity. In the same way that I feel no obligation to help strangers, I know that no one else is obligated to care for me or my family—that's my job. Granted, the events of September 11 were a national tragedy, but giving your money to any charity or group doesn't unpop that balloon. With the hurricanes destroying the South I certainly have empathy, but I feel no obligation whatsoever to do anything about it. I personally think that the weather is getting more violent and extreme as a direct result of global warming, which is a direct result of the avaricious, selfish and destructive American lifestyle. We, as a country, have to pay the price for our actions. Every action has repercussions and this is just one of them.

***Behold, I do not give lectures or a little charity, When I give, I give myself. — Walt Whitman***

You may wonder why I feel this way, but I am an American and we are good at slamming the barn door once the horses have escaped. Look at how we deal with vague terrorist threats: by banning liquids on planes. How do we deal with people getting anthrax in the mail? By making people hand mail to a person instead of dropping it in a box. And what do we do about a guy who throws rocks at our soldiers? We rape his entire family and then burn his house to the ground. Fuck prevention, we are all about massive and pointless retaliation.

So what wisdom can be gleaned from yet another confession that I am a horror of a human being? Well, if everyone was like me, there would be no blood in the hospital and no organs in the bank. When a town is wiped out by a natural disaster, everyone would just have to move somewhere else or rebuild. It's a good thing that the majority of people are suckers who willingly give away things that have value just because it makes them "feel good." My hope in writing this is that you will read what I have to say and do the exact opposite—because you naively think that it's the right thing to do, when really, empty gestures only help ameliorate your guilt. Since I don't feel guilty, I have no reason to get involved, until something bad happens to *me*.

It's not just charity, I also think on some level, 50 Cent respects the fact that I have a lot of his music but I have never given him a penny. Do the math: That makes me into the ultimate badass, ripping off 50. Come get some, playa, I ain't scared, you is the one wearing the bulletproof vest like a pussy, not me, nigga. [Forgive my grammar, I am trying to talk "street."]

There is a Ronald McDonald House in my neighborhood which is the fast food chain's charity. They offer free rooms for the families of children who come to the city for the treatment of a very serious disease. Almost every day I see a sickly little kid being pushed around the neighborhood in a wheelchair, missing his hair and looking near death. I often find myself throwing rocks at them or tripping them out of their chairs by shoving a broomhandle into the spokes of their chairs. It's hilarious and even if it hurts, they always find it funny in retrospect. I hope you realize I am kidding, but if someone wants to damn me by taking a quote out of context, there's your prize, asshole.



Yeah, I act all righteous and noble, especially in my dealings with others, but at heart, I am an animal who is primarily interested in one thing: my own survival. I know that lots of people get pleasure from doing nice things for others, but I am not one of them. I do a lot of things for other people but it is always part of a transaction that must somehow benefit me more than it benefits anyone else, otherwise I am not interested. This alone explains so much of my behavior and thought processes and it only took two really nice hits of weed to launch this entire thought out of me like a sharp shard of glass being pulled out of my brain. Ah, that feels better; now I can use my brain to find some way to justify or rationalize it, otherwise, I may be forced to somehow change my behavior, and god forbid I do something like that.

I do many kind, generous things for my family and friends, to a fault, honestly. You may not believe me because I am writing a story about what an asshole I am but I am often compelled to temper it with the sad truth that I am a mensch above all, with very strong antisocial tendencies. Not antisocial in that I want to be alone (though that is a component of it), but in the sense that I am *against society*, I want my goals to be opposite of society's because, from the looks of things, everything is getting more fucked up all the time. And my reaction to humanity is utter revulsion. People sicken me, there's no nicer way to say it. Though it does help reinforce my own sense of superiority and entitlement, it doesn't make it easier to go through life.

The original Ronald McDonald.

Here's how I am still a mensch. I saw a flyer near my apartment about a woman named Lisa. She is in her 40s, has two kids and lives in my 'hood, yo. The problem is that she has a deadly form of leukemia and she's going to die unless she gets a blood or bone marrow donation. Making it even more difficult, she needs someone who has a similar genetic profile, namely an Eastern European Jew. Well fuck me with gently with a chainsaw; talk about target marketing, putting this flyer on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. That could be my wife. And if my wife had that horrible disease, would I post flyers and beg strangers to give me a swab from inside their cheek to see if they are a potential match? Of course I would. And I would pay people and raise money, get a web site, and do everything in my power to prevent the death of someone I love. The least that I could do was go out of my way by a few blocks to fill out a long form and give them a swab from inside my cheek.

I am excessively paranoid and there were a few moments during the process when I asked, "Why am I voluntarily handing all of my genetic information over to a stranger, in a Jewish temple no less, all because of some story that I read on a flyer that may not even be true?" I imagined my personal DNA getting entered into a national database where, years from now, it's discovered that something in my blood is the only cure for a new disease and suddenly, some asshole time-traveling from the future has to kill me to prevent the discovery of the cure. *Oy gevalt*, I don't need this *tsuris*. But I still did it and if they ever call me to tell me that there's some other person whose life I could save by donating some marrow, I would do it. I can't imagine the chutzpah it would require to put myself on the donor list and then not donate when someone is dying and only I can save them. There's a very old Hebrew expression that goes, "If you save one life, you save the entire world." So I figure if I ever actually donate some of my precious bone marrow to a stranger, then I will be entitled to kill a few people because, hey, I've already saved the entire world and therefore you're all still alive merely by my mercy. So if and when that happens, watch out, I'm buying a gun.

***The worst of charity is that the lives you are asked to preserve are not worth preserving. — Ralph Waldo Emerson***

# NOVEL AMBITIONS



*MY AMBITION IN LIFE has always been to have people read what I write, and through this zine I have made that dream come true. Writers are expected to write a novel, or at least attempt one. I have always believed that the novel, more than any other artform, is supposed to have a grand idea, something that makes it more than a collection of phrases, characters and dialogue. It should have* gravitas *in order to be a* real *novel. Unfortunately for me, I am just not capable of writing genre shit; I want to write literature with a capital "L." I write the kinds of stories that I like to read. Novels with real meaning, depth and allegory have always spoken to something deep in me.*

*The grand idea I had was pretty straightforward and it all came to me in a flash one night when I had a serious deadline for a fiction class and no idea what to write. It was 1987 and I had just started to see stories in the news about people who had been incarcerated for violent crimes who were suddenly being exonerated by DNA. Most fiction is thinly veiled autobiography and the novel's premise is my own worst nightmare: being thrown in jail for something that I didn't do. I fear nothing as much as going to jail and getting beaten up or raped, and it was through this story that I planned to confront that personal demon.*

*I was trying a few specific devices in the novel, the first of which was that every chapter would start the exact same way, even if it wasn't about the same character. I called the original story "Prologue: The Victim" even though I had no idea that it would end up being a novel. Part of the reason I am publishing it now is that I want to share it and I am hoping that by putting it in print, I can pick it up again and maybe even finish it.*

*The established format for my fiction here is that I write a short intro, then the story, then my literary analysis to close it out. I am nothing if not a creature of habit, so let's stick with what works.*

## The Victim

He stood, holding the brake, looking out through the streaked windows, at the rolling lower-middle-class countryside. The landscape was full of small fenced-in lots surrounding dying or vacant homes, each complete with a dead black garden, a dog or an above-the-ground swimming pool. The snow had turned to a flat gray after days of exposure to pollution and car exhaust. Occasionally one of the dirt children could be seen playing on the tracks or riding a bicycle, now in its fourth generation of use. Their greasy hair, rusted bikes and dirty faces made him think of his own children, who would be sheltered from such depressing locales.

He looked straight ahead, following the tracks and musing to himself about how really good artists could make things far away look smaller and therefore appear more realistic. He wasn't very artistic, but he had an appreciation for comics, if that counts.

"Hicksville Station coming up next, next stop, Hicksville," he mumbled, incoherently and intentionally, into the rusting, weather-beaten microphone. Passengers actually blamed their hearing. "Those of us in the service industry aim to please," he said out loud and laughed to himself. He pulled the brake and began to switch into track six to stop. There were people waiting at the edge of the track, leaning over on the assumption that looking at trains makes them slow down and open the doors that much faster. The whole train screeched and stopped as the conductor thought for the first time in his life about being irresponsible. He desperately wanted to walk back into the train and get applause like the airline pilots do. No one appreciated him. It was a thankless job, really.

He just pulled the brake and chose the track, day in, day out, rain, shine, hail or snow. He loved his work and in his own paternal way he loved people, people he worked for, people who trusted him with their lives, and they never even got to meet him. That's why he wanted to kill them.

He couldn't, though, because he'd get caught, go to jail and die. He didn't want to go to jail, much less lose everything he had worked so hard for. "Yeah, like what?" he thought to himself out loud. He had his wife who was slowly expanding, his two kids, his old car and his dog who would lick his face after eight hours of this work. Hardly inspiration for personal satisfaction.

The train rolled on and he could smell decaying buildings and sewage on the frozen breeze seeping in through a dirty window on the side of the car. He looked around his office—this being his job, the lead car was presumably his office—and decided that he wanted a drink. Perhaps some white wine imported from France, if only he liked wine. Maybe that's why he was living like this. Deep down he really liked beer, not wine. Wine gave him hives. He was feeling empty and lonely and pathetic, standing in his sweaty flannel shirt and his polyester blue jumpsuit, holding onto a greasy brake handle somewhere west of Hicksville.

A train screamed past on the other track looking like it was travelling too fast to be under the control of a rational mind. He wondered about the pain involved if he should perform a manual override and switch tracks. He would smash headfirst into the train coming from the other direction. Probably a great deal of pain would be involved. Not a very mature or nice way to commit suicide, but then again the people he was stuck driving around all night probably couldn't care less about his personal problems. They just wanted to get to the city and live their lives. He felt used and scorned. He worked all night long and for what? Maybe he'd be able to buy a boat in five years if he kept saving money, but he knew after years of living with himself that he would probably lose it while gambling or have to spend it on something stupid like his transmission. Besides all of that, his 13-year-old daughter would probably be needing braces soon and his nagging wife would probably need money for another fun-filled trip to see his in-laws in scenic New Jersey.

He began to brake as another station rolled up and he quickly grabbed the microphone. He looked around to get his bearings but he knew the order of stations better than his own name.

"Woodside, Woodside station. Next stop, Penn Station, Pennsylvania Station, next and final stop," he mumbled as another train flew by, bringing him back to reality.

He pulled into Penn station a few minutes later and grabbed his lunchbox and his heavy coat. He saw Charlie, one of the ticket collectors, and waved. Charlie waved back and gave his Standard Friday Response, "Have a good weekend, Dan; try not to have too much fun." Dan just looked at him and thought to himself that at least he was better than the ticket collectors. Small consolation. He felt good about letting all of his passengers live, but next time he came back he might just bring a six-pack with him. That might give him the courage to make some serious decisions.



## The Hunter

He stood, in an alley, inhaling cigarette smoke through his nostrils, and waited. He looked at his hands expecting to see sharp claws like the lion he imagined himself to be. No claws, just dirt under his growing fingernails. A couple walked by under the bright lights, not even noticing him standing in the shadows just inches from them. They were not afraid, he could tell, because as a hunter, he was trained to smell fear, even through his own stench. The cigarette, now slowly burning the filter, did not affect this, his keenest of senses. He threw the cigarette to the ground and looked up at the streetlights. The cold was starting to penetrate his skin and he inhaled deeply before exhaling a cloud of thick, white smoke.

A woman walked toward him, alone, and he looked away from his breath and concentrated on the figure that was now approaching. He was forcing his eyes to adjust from the darkness of the alley to the brightness of the street. She moved toward the alley with quick, direct steps, obviously unaware of the hunter. He smiled as he thought of his own expert camouflage; a good hunter is undetectable until it is time for the kill. When she came close enough for him to see her, he realized that she was around sixty or seventy, too old to put up a fight. He was not a scavenger or a vulture, he was a true hunter. His prey would have to struggle and resist, he would have to prove his superiority. Weeding out the sick and the old was only for those hunters who were no longer capable of taking down the strong and fast.

But not Ian Culpert. He was capable of stalking and capturing the fittest, even the leader of the pack, if that was his choice. He was king of the jungles of New York City and even though he had not yet been given a nickname by the tabloid press, his accomplishments had been noticed.

The old woman walked past but she would be spared in the hopes that something better would come by. He had all night to wait and had not aroused any suspicion yet. His hands were starting to sweat despite the cold. He heard the distinctive click of heels and imagined his ears folding back instinctively. His eyes opened wide as he began to slowly move back into the dark recesses of the alley. He closed his eyes and imagined his mother standing next to him in the alley, yelling at him and poking him with a giant, pointy, penis-shaped fork. He started to explain why he was here to his phantom, but she wasn't listening. She poked him in the chest and he felt himself start to bleed. He started to back away, but he was heading for the edge of the alley and out into the light. He fell backwards and knocked some garbage cans out into the street as he started to scream. He looked up, expecting to see his mother, but she was gone. He tried to focus but could not. He vaguely heard the clicking jump in tempo as the sound of his intended victim disappeared. The dark shape in the distance faded away as the blackness swallowed her whole.

He sat next to the fallen garbage cans, in a wide puddle of refuse, embarrassed and cold. Lions did not trip while trying to escape ghosts. The internal tides of anger begin to rise as the blood seeped into his cheeks. He stood up and began to chase the figure that had faded into the night. He couldn't hear the heels or see anyone. The street was empty. He stopped, realizing the futility of his chase. He walked slowly over to Sixth Avenue, just to browse, on his way to a new patch of tall grass. He walked past a bar and looked in. No one there worth waiting for. He felt suddenly very awkward, walking around the city in a dirty blue jumpsuit that he had stolen from the gas station where he worked before he was fired.

He looked away from his own reflection in the glass to see another man in a similar blue jumpsuit walking up to the bar, muttering to himself. The other man looked at Ian and then quickly looked away. Ian's first instincts said *fag*, but he wasn't hunting for that kind of prey. He took a deep breath and made a left onto 32nd Street to find someplace comfortable to sit and wait in ambush.

He walked at a comfortable pace for the cold and stopped at every alley to look around. Too bright, too small, might be rats, he thought to himself as he passed a group of apartment buildings. Near the corner he found a small and poorly lit

alley and since there was no one around, he casually walked in to check it out. "This'll do me fine," he thought to himself as he leaned back against the wall and reached into his pocket for his cigarettes. He took one out and lit it, inhaling slowly, studying the way the flame seemed to eat the cigarette's soul and leave the ashes for a memorial.

Dan came out of Penn Station with a smirk on his face, feeling like a hero who could not tell of his heroics. He had spared countless lives with the sheer force of his will. As such a hero, he deserved a drink. It was time to drink a nice imported beer, not just "whatever's on tap," his usual. He headed over to Sixth Avenue, looking for a bar to get a drink before the drive back to Yonkers. He saw a guy standing outside a bar looking in. He was wearing the same stupid blue jumpsuit that Dan was, but the one on the other guy fit a little better. He thought, *my kinda place*, and crossed the street. He walked up to the bar and stood next to the other man. He looked at his face and quickly realized he had made a mistake: It wasn't the same uniform, this guy was a gas station attendant. Feeling superior, Dan looked away and headed into the bar for a drink.

Ian heard someone walking in his direction. In his head Aerosmith was blaring, "Walk This Way, bitch" and he smiled at his mind's ability to change the lyrics to suit his mood and play it as if it was supposed to be that way. He peered out of the shadows to see a young woman in a spandex jogging outfit, walking quickly with headphones on very loud. "Come to me, my pretty," he said out loud, to test her hearing. She didn't notice. "Perfect," he said as he waited for the distance between them to be safe enough for him to follow. He was itching to be on the hunt and his heart was beating faster as the first wave of adrenaline hit his legs and the first wave of blood hit his cock. She was thirty yards ahead of him and walking at an aggressive pace. He hesitated just for a second and then hit the ground running.

He looked ahead and saw her walking up a set of stairs to a weathered brownstone. As her keys touched the lock, he was sprinting, breathing furiously. She opened the door and stepped inside as he mounted the stairs, almost tripping over the top stair. He flew into the woman and knocked her onto the floor, sending her glasses flying. He looked at her and smiled before kicking her in the ribs. Ian turned to the door to close and lock it as the woman started to cry.

"What do you want?" she screamed at him as he turned to stand over her. He reached into the pocket of his jumpsuit and took out a switchblade. He held it in front of his face and opened it.

"What's your favorite position, babe?" he asked with an awkward sense of confidence. She looked up at him as her eyes widened, as an attempt to both focus and comprehend the situation. She crawled backwards toward the wall, sliding in her sweaty spandex.

"Where are ya goin', honey?" he asked with an innocent expression. "Doncha wanna be with me tonight?" She felt around behind her back as Ian approached her. He ripped the headphones off her neck and tossed them across the floor. He reached down and unzipped his jumpsuit as she hit the button on the silent alarm on the wall. Ian came toward her and grabbed the front of her loose sweatshirt and started to shred it with his bare hands. He stepped out of his jumpsuit, erection in hand, and smiled. "Relax, honey, afterwards you'll thank me," he said as he started to laugh. She was paralyzed with fear as her body was flooded with adrenaline. Even with her glasses she would have been unable to focus, she was so overwhelmed with panic. Even if he had known, he wouldn't have cared.

Dan looked at his fourth beer in its fresh, frosty glass. He was getting tipsy but so far there were no outward signs of his intoxication. The bartender had been ignoring Dan for most of the night, obviously unaware of his heroics. In Dan's buzzed mind, he imagined himself as the hip bartender in a cool downtown night spot, sliding frosty mugs across the bar to all the babes who came in more to see him than to drink. The fantasy became more vivid as the hottest woman in the bar leaned across the bar to whisper her order in his ear. "Oh, you want some tongue," he said to the woman, "well, I'm not the butcher, but I think we have some in the back room; follow me." She stood up to follow him and he realized she was completely naked, and so was he. Even in his own fantasy he couldn't hide his erection. Not that it was all that huge, it was just that when naked, it was presumably the only thing this girl was looking for.

The bartender came over to him, took away the empty glass and stared for a minute before laughing. Dan came out of his daze and looked around, hoping he hadn't done anything really stupid. "Hey, buddy, are you okay? You kinda spaced out for a minute there. Do you want another beer?" the bartender was asking him, between fits of laughter.

"Yeah, hurry it up," Dan said realizing that his mouth was suddenly very dry. "And can the commentary," he said, trying to sound forceful and confident but sounding like a little brother who wants you to stop tickling him. The bartender continued to laugh and handed Dan his beer with a self-satisfied smirk. Dan drank the beer as if it was his first and felt a surge of warmth in his chest that signalled a body on the verge of drunkenness. About halfway through the beer he looked at the bartender and motioned him over as forcefully as possible without being rude. "Got the time?"

"Yeah, pal, it's almost one."

He finished his beer and threw a twenty on the bar. He grabbed his coat and walked straight out, not looking back.

"Stupid bitch, I thought I told you not to move," Ian said as her kicked her again. Her eyes were bloodshot and her ribs were bruised, bordering on broken. He walked over to where her glasses were and stomped them until they were flat. He was pleased with sound of glass being crushed and he was trying to keep even the small details fresh in his mind to record in his diary later. He had taken photos of the first five victims for his scrapbook but he realized it was a dangerous thing to do. He wanted some kind of trophy but lions didn't carry cameras, they had memories of the hunt stored in their genes. Hunters had children who were hunters, it was their nature.

He zipped up his suit while watching her carefully, but she seemed unusually quiet. He felt his ears pull back and visions of the six-million-dollar man using his bionic hearing made him break out in a wide smile. He forced the thought from his head so that he could concentrate on listening. No sirens yet, but it wouldn't take very long, even in this neighborhood. "Thanks for everything. Hope I can call you again soon." He walked over to where she was lying crumpled on the floor, still naked and red, and realized that she had stopped crying soon after he had come in. He sensed some danger but his senses were not as acute as he thought they were.

## The Meeting

He stood, outside the bar, lost in thought, before walking straight to his car. He had a few momentary bouts of drunken vertigo, but nothing that was obvious enough to indicate his level of intoxication. Dan already had his keys out and was trying to remember what the bartender had said right before he left. It didn't matter.

He found his car and climbed in. The inside of the car was even colder than the air outside and he exhaled a thick cloud of mist which quickly found a home as frost on the inside of the windshield. He methodically pumped the gas pedal as clouds of smoke poured from the back of the car. He warmed it up for a few minutes before he was confident enough in his driving and his car to head home.

With any luck at all, his wife would be asleep and not snoring, but they always seemed to go together so well. If she was awake, he would probably be just drunk enough to seduce her. The idle fantasies in the bar had awakened his libido. He remembered a joke his cousin told him at his wedding. "How does a real man know when his woman has had an orgasm?" Pause for a second, "Who cares?" It never failed to make him laugh. The most amusing part was that when he told his wife, it took her almost two full minutes to get the joke. He knew because he was timing her. When she got it, she hit him, but it was playful, not angry.

He shifted into reverse and began the process of pulling out of a New York City parking spot. Now there's a good test of driving ability. He thought maybe if cops wanted to give you a really hard time, they could make you parallel park instead of walking a stupid line. Twice he had been pulled over for DWI and had been unable to walk the line. He had been humiliated by having his car impounded. One more of those and he would probably never get to drive again. Ever.



He finally pulled out of the spot and headed down the street. The light was green so he stepped on the gas pedal in order to make the light. He always felt so stupid sitting at a red light when it was obvious that there wasn't another car around for miles. He felt challenged to make the light.

Ian walked down the stairs before breaking into a run. He had to get back to Queens soon to work on an alibi. He knew it would never come to that, but part of the work of being a hunter was mulling over various alibis and running down any witnesses. He sprinted down the street and saw a cab race by with some rap song blaring out of the open windows. "It's fucking winter, man. What a psycho," he said to himself. He was more aware of the cold now as it violated his jumpsuit. It made him feel like he was really alive, even though he would probably get sick. His sweat had dried in the cold but if given more time it probably would have frozen.

Dan was going almost sixty miles an hour and he was amazed that his fine American car could even move that fast at all, especially after such a cold start. His car went screaming through the intersection and down the next street. The next light was also green so he floored it. In his drunken haze he thought that he was drag racing another car, a Porsche to be precise, and he was kicking the shit out of the other driver. As he approached the next intersection he noticed that he had forgotten to turn on his headlights.

Ian looked to his right and began to weave in and out of the parked cars near the intersection. He knew that it was too cold to be standing around so close to the scene of a crime.

Dan reached around the dashboard of his car looking for the lightswitch. He was drunk but managed to activate the rear defroster and spray the windshield with a coat of blue liquid before he finally found the switch. He pulled the switch and instantly, his lights were on. It was like waking up. In front of him something moved in the shadows, but he was still amazed that he'd found the lights and was busy congratulating himself on his major accomplishment despite his drunkenness.

Ian stepped into the intersection and it was like stepping onstage for a sold-out performance. He was startled by bright lights off to his left that came from nowhere. He was too amazed to move. He felt like an animal in traffic as he was suddenly blinded by light and lifted off the ground by the force of a car, smashing him in the hip and sending him flying. His body flew over the parked cars and landed in the gutter, in a pile of garbage. The impact perforated his head, opening it to allow his brain and skull to splatter in the shape of a flower.

"Oh fuck! Was that a dog, oh god please tell me that was some fucking rabies-infected, homeless mongrel and not a person." Dan was agitated. His car stalled, but he was still rolling pretty fast. He hit the emergency brake with all of his strength as he wet his pants. The car would be fine, he hoped. He stopped the car and was running as soon as it was still. He ran to where he thought he saw the body land to look at what he'd hit. It was definitely not a dog. It was that scary guy he had seen outside the bar. "Jesus H. Christ on a popsicle stick," he said to the dead man. There was blood coming out of the dead man's mouth and his head was draining into a puddle that looked to Dan like a daisy. He was not breathing.

Dan sat down and tried to think about what to do. "You're in deep shit now, you dumb drunk fuck," he screamed at himself. Suddenly he felt very sober and very scared. There hadn't been much noise from the accident and the street was unnaturally quiet for the city. Then he heard a sound, distant at first, but unmistakable. It was the sound of sirens. Police sirens. His pupils shrank to pinpoints as the hair on the back of his neck came to attention. Running on autopilot, he dragged the body into an alley and covered it with garbage. Dan figured he could get back to his car and wait for the sirens to be gone and then deal with the body later. Besides, even if he had to leave it here, the cold would keep the body from rotting and attracting attention. He ran back to his car and hopped inside. No time to survey the damage.

The sirens were coming closer and he couldn't get his car to start. He looked over his shoulder expecting to see the see the police behind him, but they weren't there. A woman came out onto the stairs of a brownstone wearing a robe and looking like quite a mess. "Oh, shit, she heard me hit that guy. I'm fucked now," he said to himself. A hit-and-run with no witnesses was close to a perfect crime. Hanging around while waiting for the police to come would be a fatal flaw in his judgment. The woman heard him trying to start his car and was looking in his direction. Then he saw the lights.

He was grinding the starter of his car, trying desperately to get it going. He was denying the apparent futility of his actions. Better to have false hope than no hope. It was not in his destiny to drive away and spend the rest of his life trying to forget this night and forgive himself.

The police car screeched to a stop behind Dan's car, and one of the officers walked up to the woman while the other walked over to the driver's side of Dan's car. Dan could see in the side-view mirror that he already had his gun out. The cop walked slowly up to Dan and pointed the gun at his head.

"Put your fucking hands in the air and get out slowly. And don't try anything stupid, this gun is loaded, pal, and boy are my hands cold." In the mirror, Dan saw the woman talking to the other cop and she was crying.

She looked at the shiny blue uniform in front of her and was having difficulty focusing without her glasses.

"Geez, this broad is a mess," the cop thought to himself.

"Are you okay, miss?" the cop asked her, even though he knew the answer.

"I think my ribs are broken and my lip is still bleeding."

"Our first order of business is to get you to a doctor as soon

as possible, so if you'd like to get dressed, the ambulance is on its way. If you're up to it I'd like to ask you a few questions now. Is that okay with you?"

"Fine."

"Did you know the guy who did it?"

"No."

"Never saw him before? Never had a date with him?"

"No."

"Can you describe him?"

She thought for a moment and realized that she really hadn't seen his face clearly. From the looks of things, the cops had caught the guy already; stupid bastard couldn't start his car.

Dan opened his door slowly and stepped out. "Keep your fucking hands up where I can see 'em. Put 'em on the roof and spread your legs." Dan was frisked and, as expected, the cop found nothing of interest. The cop reached into his own back pocket and took out a weathered switchblade. He slid it in Dan's pocket and pulled it out again.

"Look what we have here, Bobby. This is a concealed weapon, pal. This might be okay if you had only one arm, but you got two, doncha, sport?"

Bobby looked at him. "Looks like our man. This has been the easiest case we've had in a while." The cop put Dan in handcuffs and turned him around to look him in the eyes. "Big tough guy, huh? Gotta beat up women to get laid? Well, not to worry, pal, this city is fair and you'll get the justice you deserve." Then the cop pulled his arm almost as far as he could and punched Dan in the face with all of his strength. "Resisting arrest, huh? Boy, you are a dumb fuck, arencha?" Dan started to cry, in confusion as much as fear. He was abruptly read his rights.

"You have the right to remain silent. You have the right to get kicked in the nuts," the cop said, and then allowed Dan to exercise this right. "You have the right to have an attorney present during questioning. If you cannot afford one, one will be appointed for you." He continued reading Dan his rights as Dan slid down the side of his car.

The lights of the oncoming ambulance gave the once dark street the appearance of daylight. The woman was helped by Bobby and some medics onto a stretcher, which was quickly wheeled aboard the ambulance. The ambulance sped off, its lights flashing and sirens wailing.

Dan was harshly tossed into the back seat of the police car. As he smacked his head into the back of the seat, reality hit him head-on like an out-of-control train. He was going to jail. A one-second lapse and he was going to jail. Now was a good time to pass out, so he did. The last thing he saw were the first flakes of snow.

Ian's corpse had begun to freeze as the snow slowly buried him in his bed of garbage.

## The Sinking

He stood in his cell and felt his face. It was still tender and just starting to scab over. He looked at the guard and asked him when he could make his phone call. He had been trying to decide between his wife and his lawyer, and decided that his lawyer wouldn't yell at him. Besides, his lawyer could call his wife and explain it to her.

"Maybe later, if you're a good boy. Is that okay, scumbag?" the guard responded, with just a hint of sarcasm.

Dan walked back to his little bed and sat down, putting his head in his hands. In addition to the pleasure of waking up in jail, he was also blessed with a broken face, sore balls and a furiously buzzing hangover that made even his own thoughts seem a little too loud. He felt like he was going to cry, but his instincts told him that it would only make things worse. At least he was alone in his cell. He was thinking of a commercial for a law firm that he had seen on T.V. all the time but in his state he couldn't remember the name of it.

He stretched out on his cot, wondering how he'd been able to sleep on it the night before. Then his hangover reminded him that he had been pretty drunk and he had successfully hidden his condition from the men who had brought him here. Murder and drunk driving. Vehicular manslaughter and operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol. He still couldn't believe it, so he said it out loud, but not loud enough for the guard to hear.

He stood up and walked back to the bars and held them again. There was a certain safety here. In fact, he was thinking that at this point it was safer behind bars than it would have been if he had been released to his wife. He began to wonder what she was thinking. She must have noticed that he hadn't come home last night and that he had said that he would be home by two. Maybe she didn't notice. He decided that worrying wouldn't change anything. This realization did not make him stop worrying, he was just aware of its pointlessness.

Another cop came toward Dan with a glint in his eyes that made Dan step back into his cell. He didn't feel safe anymore, trapped in a small cage with a bunch of psychos carrying guns and watching him. The policeman told the guard to take a break and get some coffee and donuts. Dan smiled when he heard the word "donuts" and in his head he was screaming, "Yeah, you fat fuck, do your job and protect the world by stuffing your face with donuts!" Smiling was not a good idea.

"What the fuck are you smiling at, fuckface?" the cop was asking him as he opened the door to Dan's cell, slowly drawing his baton out of its leather holster. He hit Dan in the ribs as the smile quickly left Dan's face. Dan decided that he was not going to hit back. The guard continued the assault until Dan fell into his cot, moaning and holding onto himself. He could barely see the cop leave and lock the door as he slipped into unconsciousness.

He felt like he was sleeping on a bed of metal lumps. Dan heard snoring in the back of his mind as he slept and looked over to see where it was coming from. The sound was coming from his wife. She was sleeping on her back with her mouth wide open and a long stream of drool draining from the corner of her mouth almost down to her ample cleavage. He felt so incredibly relieved by the sight. It was comforting to be back home in his own bed, as uncomfortable as it was.

He realized that it wasn't the bed, but his body that was causing him so much pain, as he bobbed just below

the surface of reality. He turned over on his back, but it didn't seem to help. He was bruised on the front and the back so he decided to try his sides to see if they were bruised. They were. He sat up, still half asleep, and propped himself up on his pillow. At home he had two pillows and could usually steal a third from his wife after she fell asleep.

He sat up in his cot, unable to sleep, and debated whether or not to jerk off. It usually helped to fall asleep. He thought his dick might be one of the few areas of his body that didn't hurt to touch. Then he remembered that he was still in jail, with cops everywhere, and they might interrupt him. He couldn't imagine giving himself blueballs. Not here. After a few minutes he decided to take the chance, and within a minute he was relaxed enough to come. After he did he took a deep breath and rolled over to attempt sleep again.

• • •

*Now that I have established the premise, the next order of business is to have Dan convicted and sentenced, which is the part I am really just not that interested in. I don't want to give too much of it away, but let's just say that Dan gets away with murder, but pays dearly for the rape. After a few years of completely neglecting the novel, I decided that I wanted to take another crack at it, but from a different angle. I wanted to skip ahead in the chronology and try telling part of the story in a completely different style. The thing is, I have the whole story in my head, all the plot points, the story arc and everything, it's just that I am not sure how to tell it. When I was younger I was much more linear in my approach but as I have gotten older, I have started to realize that being linear is not only boring, it doesn't serve the story. So I wrote a new short story, using all the same characters and plot, but this time I decided to change my writing style to suit the material. Ultimately, if I am going to finish the novel, I am going to have to find a comfortable style for it so I don't get bored or frustrated. Finally, I gave this story its title about a year before a movie was released with the same name, but that movie was horrible and hopefully no one will ever remember it.*



## Terminal Velocity

He was closed now, for better or worse. He was never meant to be powerless and penetrated, he was a man, and as such, bore the responsibilities and freedoms that being a man entailed. He had finally shaken the unnerving habit of hearing things behind him. His neck muscles, trained to snap back defensively, had begun to slowly atrophy. He wanted her to scream, but she wouldn't oblige him, at least not by screaming. If he could not hear her scream he would hear her cry, it wasn't as good, but even crying was a distant second to begging. He didn't think that she looked anything like his wife, ex-wife, whatever the hell she wanted to call herself, and for that he was marginally grateful. Not her fault. Not his fault. Whose fault then, Dan? Who? That guy, that fucking dead guy who'd been buried in an unmarked grave courtesy of the State of New York. He couldn't even visit that guy, the one guy who he dreamt about alone in his cell before Hugo woke him and penetrated him. Penetrated him. Like he was some kind of cheap inflatable doll, Margie-Mount-Me, Dan-Do-Me. Don't.

So angry. So Fucking Angry. No voices in his head, just the same feeling he had skydiving, the one time he had gone. Falling out of control, approaching terminal velocity, when he was falling as fast he was going to, the only thing that would stop him or even slow him down was the coiled metal in his hand and the sprawling green that was fast approaching from below. Now all he had was rage, eternal, bottomless rage, at the base of a deep well that light could not, would not, penetrate. The world was his to possess, to use, to crush until it bled, to stomp until it cried, to twist until it snapped like the muscles in his neck.

A kick to the head, there, now you will cry, your head is a button that turns on that thing that makes you cry and that is what I want to hear and that is what you will do and I do not want to argue and I do not want to discuss and I do not want to listen to anything but the sound of your eyes ejecting tears and your pathetic powerless attempts to breathe. A clear thought. I am Dan the Man. The Man, and you are mine, and you have no power and you have no say. Thanks for your cooperation. He raped her as violently as he could, contorting his face, spitting when he could, cursing when he couldn't, and she cried. It was just as intoxicating as he knew it would be. He didn't understand very much but finally, he truly understood Hugo. He also understood himself. And for a brief, glorious, shining moment, he felt peace. It was uneasy peace, but it was all that he had and all that he needed. All that he desperately needed.

He watched television in his halfway house and read the letter from Andrew, his lawyer, again. "Dear Dan, I am sorry that I didn't believe you, you were right and I was wrong. It doesn't matter now, you can start your life where you left off, a clean slate, a big settlement on the way. If you need anything else, give me a call." That was a lie. He didn't return phone calls. Not anymore. Start over? He didn't have a job anymore, didn't have friends, he didn't have a family anymore, his kids had a new "Daddy." Money. Plenty of money. He had sold his soul. Correction. His soul had been stolen and he had been belatedly compensated for it. Overcompensated. Now he would do all the compensating, he would have the power. He would do whatever the fuck he wanted to. He was grinding his teeth. His stomach growled and he had a sandwich. If nothing else in the world, the food was better. Fresh meat every single day. Roast beef. Fresh, salty ham. Turkey on rye with mustard. The thick, salty tongue ripped from a mute carcass, the brains of a baby cow, the small, dark hearts of chickens, slaughtered for his nourishment, sacrificed for him alone. It was delicious, all that blood and lonely suffering. He wanted to ride a train, knowing that it would be painful, knowing that it might take him back, knowing that he wasn't even close to being stable, but wanting it, he had to make it so. Two years of lonely suffering and the air was intoxicating, invigorating. No more forced regiments, no more twisted glances, no more jungle politics, eat or be eaten. He was never going to be that soft again, with anything. He didn't care about his thinning hair, didn't give a flying rat's ass about the cold. The air was delicious, almost as delicious as the sound of begging and the taste of nicotine and bile. He kicked the wall, grabbed his coat and went out to take in the air. Take it in, but it would not penetrate him.

He decided to quit smoking. In an instant. Crumpled his Camels and chucked them into an open sewer. Nothing had power over him. He walked the seventeen blocks like it was a foot. Felt absolutely nothing. Walked past a cluster of vagrants clumped over a subway vent and felt nothing. Paid for a roundtrip ticket to Riverhead and went to a newsstand. He didn't see anything even vaguely interesting, but after staring at the cover of some gay porno magazine he felt sick and very angry. Sick and tired. He walked around Penn Station in silence, trying to suppress the memory of Hugo and his awful rotting teeth. He wondered what his son Martin looked like, probably had a paunch in the making, that was genetic, generational. He wanted a smoke but rationalized it instantly.

He wanted it but he did not need it. It was still currency in his mind and he wanted to be rich. Rich and powerful.

Guilty. You are guilty. The judge said it, Andrew believed it, Cindy, his ex, believed it, his in-laws had known about his dark secrets all along. Guilty, yes. Guilty of drinking and driving. Guilty of murder, or, rather, vehicular manslaughter. Killed the rapist. Killed the rapist as he tried to escape. Not guilty of rape, the victim of rape. Wrong place, very, very wrong time. The only thing that saved him was one small strand of crusted DNA, but it came two years too late. The judge even apologized. An easy mistake, but one that would never happen again. It might happen again, but not to Dan. Nothing would happen to him ever again. He would make things happen, but now he had armor, thick and hard. Impossible to penetrate and no one would ever get close enough to even try. Now if he should smell danger he would run, he would mount a tree like a cougar, he would take to the air like a falcon. He would not be caught, he would never be penetrated by anything again: air, death, Hugo.

Hugo was tapping him on the shoulder.

"Wake up, buddy. It's time."

Dan clenched his teeth and ran. Ran through Penn Station like the devil was chewing malevolently on his ass. He kicked his feet up as high as he could, hoping to catch the devil in the chin. He ignored his wheezing, ignored the sharp pain in his lungs, ignored Hugo, who was tapping him on the shoulder. Hugo had him in a headlock, was choking him to the ground, but Dan was running and kicking the devil and getting away. He was trying so hard just to get away. Get away, Hugo.

No evil but desire, desire for vengeance. No evil but bureaucracy, stifling and irrational. No evil but ambition, it will never be enough. No point in taking any chances, not unless the witnesses were the walking wounded. No reward for atonement, not when the sinner isn't punished and the devil owns your soul, bites your ass, and then dies, kicking and screaming, in the back of your throat.

No one recognized him on the train; he was easy to avoid. He sniffed the air, extended his feelers, searching for the sound of a struggling minnow. They always gave off vibrations, very faint, barely perceptible, unless that was all there was to look for. Then it was deafening. It was so loud it made your fillings vibrate and your vision tremble. Dan knew that Vince was running the train—it was Dan's former shift, it used to be "Dan's train," and Vince used to take over when Dan went home.

For a second, the former Dan, the family Dan, the fearful Dan, the hopeful Dan, the pristine Dan, struggled in the festering muck, seeing light at the top of the abyss. The former Dan was too feeble, too powerless, and the undertow sucked him right back down while he continued to struggle. Dan grimaced with satisfaction, thrilled to crush the Dan that Hugo crushed. He and Hugo were one and the same now, monsters without fangs, monsters who fed on fear, monsters.

He drifted under the beds and in the hearts of victims he had not yet met. Victims like him, and Hugo. Impossible to pinpoint the transition, it was like trying to stop your brain from thinking so you could find the comma, point to the period. It was all a mess, a jumble of a run-on sentence that starts when you're born and ends when you die. Impossible to stop the tide. When is it high and when is it low and when is the exact point between the two? Impossible to pinpoint. Dan closed his eyes and slept peacefully on the train, letting the steady rhythm rock him like a baby, like a baby he knew he never was. The fluorescent lights of the train flickered and went out. Flickered and went out.

• • •

*I like to make literary references in my work and there's clearly an influence of Franz Kafka and Dante Alighieri in the story. The main character is named Dante, though he is always called Dan, and I think of his journey as being similar to Dante's tour of Hell in* Inferno. *He will end up suffering for his sins and there is no way out.*

*If the novel can be said to have a point, it is that in this one case, a somewhat innocent man was turned into a very guilty man, simply by punishing him for a crime he didn't commit.*

*I have often been caught doing very minor things while getting away with crimes that were far worse. My nightmare would be to get punished for something I didn't do that is severe, while also getting away with something more minor. Obviously, this story is taking it to a much higher level and in no way do I think that drunk driving and murder are less severe than rape. By killing the rapist and taking the fall for his crime, Dan is ultimately going to be punished for a crime he didn't commit while getting away with the drunk driving and murder.*

*In the other chapters, Dan loses his family and the faith of his friends, which is almost as bad as losing his freedom. Even his own lawyers don't believe in his innocence, which makes him start to doubt himself on a primal level.*

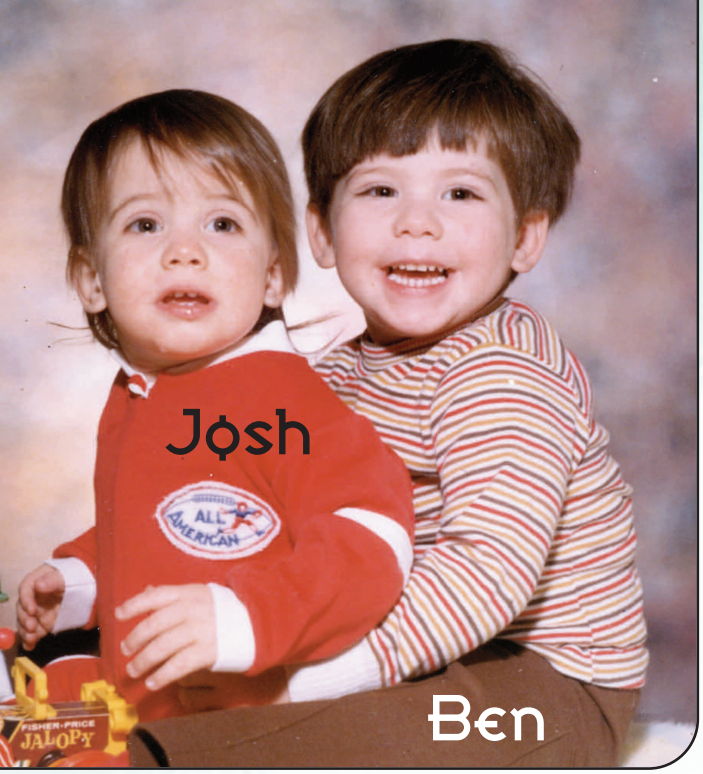
*As a result of his treatment behind bars, he literally becomes the man he killed: a vicious rapist. The original title was "Justice: The System" but I never really liked it. It has gone through a few other titles but it's now in a holding pattern as "Just Because," just because it still works for me.*

*I didn't want to base it on any real stories because those stories aren't mine to tell. My point was that prison and punishment really do not solve the problems that they are purported to solve. No one ever gets sent to jail and says, "Now I get it.* Stealing is wrong.*" Recidivism is near seventy percent for most crimes and being in jail has become a fact of life for far too many people. I am not on my soapbox demanding prison or judicial reform or even saying that criminals should be set free because jail is very unpleasant. What I am saying is that we as a society are continuing to expend huge amounts of time and money serving the prison industry, and who is it that most clearly benefits? The general public, who may feel a little safer, the victims and their families, who don't have to worry that a criminal is on the streets and, of course, the people who get paid to keep the problem out of sight and out of mind. The fact that there are now for-profit prisons means that things will only continue to get worse.*

*Politically speaking, I have always felt like prison was counter-productive because for people like me, just the threat of prison is more then enough to get me to behave properly. For some people, even being in jail for years will never be enough to get them to live a straight life.*

*The secondary point was that all too often people who might otherwise have gone on to live productive lives are so damaged by jail that they are useless to society upon their release. Even a novice pimp knows that if you want your girls to make top dollar, you don't send them out on the streets with a black eye. You know that it hurts their confidence, and therefore, their earning power. This can only reflect my vast experience working as a pimp, I cannot say that it's a universal truth amongst pimps because I am sure there are valid arguments for and against the streetwalker black eye and I am far too inexperienced a philosopher to delve into such a thorny issue. Maybe a different analogy would be better. The man at the fruit stand would be well-advised not to bruise his own fruit if he has any intention of selling it.*

*Even if I never finish this novel, just writing it was a great learning experience. I realized that talking about writing a novel is a hell of a lot easier than actually sitting down and doing it. I have an entirely different novel that I have also attempted a few different times, but it is on a more mainstream topic and it would be the final book of "Karoshi." It's still packed to the rafters with bitterness and bile, which will always be my hallmark.*




My older brother Ben and I are only eighteen months apart and we get along very well, but we're very different people. We never played in a band together and we live on different coasts but keep in touch online. Our lives have turned out similarly, but that's just a happy accident. He has been an Alpha Geek for so long that he was finally made a VP at the Googler and I have been toiling away in IT for the last several years. He has two sons, I have two sons. Is that it? He's a PC, I'm a Mac. He's a Jew, I'm an atheist. He loves the suburbs, I love the city. He loves to drive, I hate it. He always blogs, Twitters, Facebooks, Foursquares and whatever else they just came out with. Oh wait, I do all of that stupid shit too, except the blogging.

This is a real conversation that I had with him while my wife was stuck at her office working late. It helps to know that the actual chat is indented, my brother is in italics, and the quoted letter is across the full column.

8:48 PM

*Ben Saitz: A woman that works for me is filing a sexism complaint.*

Jøsh Saitz: Wow, what did you do?

*I banged her, then fired her.*

Congrats on convincing one person that you're not gay.

*What's so wrong with that?*

I thought you fire them if they don't bang you. Why would you fire her if she puts out?

*She wasn't good enough, so I fired her.*

Sounds like she has a case. Where did the bad geek touch you, dear? Poor kid.

No, really, what happened?

[cut and paste from the woman's actual complaint] *"This e-mail is to report that I believe that I have been discriminated against based on my sex, female, and that I have not been paid equal to male counterparts, in violation of Title VII and the Equal Pay Act. Last week I spoke with* [REDACTED] *about these concerns, but I do not think he has reported my complaints to anyone, nor do I believe that anyone has initiated an investigation into my complaints. Therefore, I would request that* [REDACTED] *investigate my concern that I have been discriminated against and not paid equally.*

*The following are my areas of concern:*

*Prior to the reorganization, I was the only Manager, and the only female Manager who had Director-level responsibilities in that I was managing several teams, multiple positions, products and people. However, I was never officially promoted to the role of Director nor was I paid accordingly. My male counterparts, who had similar or the exact same responsibilities, were all promoted to Director and paid accordingly.*

*After the reorganization, and because I was not officially given the Director title, I believe that I was demoted simply because I am a woman, and/or because I was not given the Director title, which was simply because I am a woman (please see above).*

*After the reorganization, many men were offered severance packages, but women, including me, were not offered severance packages. I believe that I was not offered a severance package because I am a woman and/or because I was not a Director, which is solely because I am a woman (please see above)."*

*Last one... "Finally,* [REDACTED] *does not have any women in senior positions, which furthers my belief that I have been denied promotions because of my sex. Once an investigation is initiated, I will be happy to discuss my concerns with you."*

So why are you guys holding her down like that? Give the baby her bottle! Give her your job! A woman could do your job!

*She wants it, but she can't do it, not b/c she has a vagine.*

No testicles?

*But b/c she's not even close to ready.*

You know how women are, man, they want what they can't have...

*I know.*

And don't want what they can have.

*I know. So now I get to spend extra time with lawyers.*

Wow... I would guess, w/o any info, that the reason there are no women in charge is that there are very few qualified women in your field at your level of experience.

*It's a numbers game, there are few women, so naturally, few in charge, plus, they don't have penises.*

I thought it was b/c of a hostile work environment or something. [My wife]'s dad got sued for that when he owned a law firm.

*Is it wrong to smack women on the ass? I hope not. I should just call them "shapely fannies."*

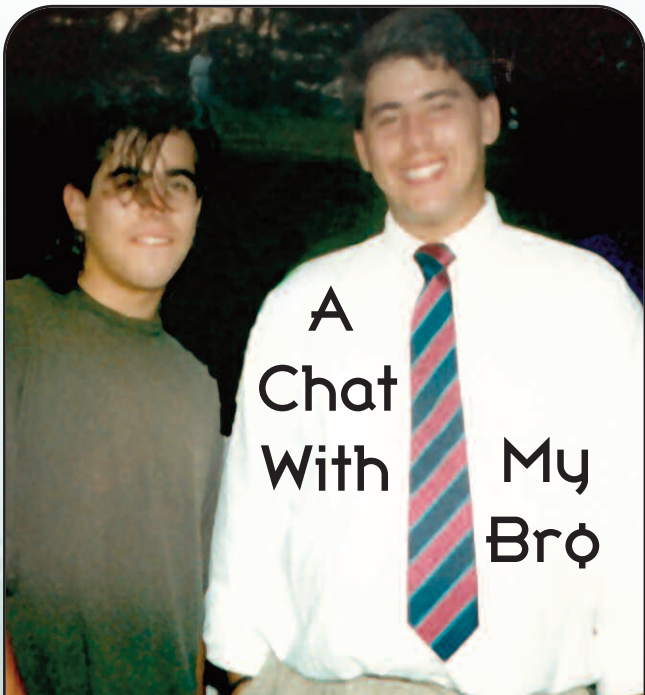
This chick said she had IBS and would head to work, get an attack in the car and then go home for the day. She did this for about nine months. Worked about a fifth of that.

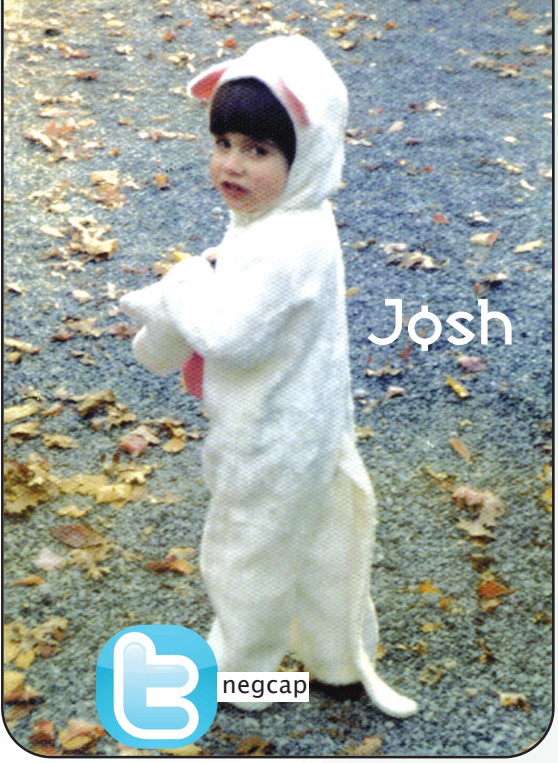
*IBS, that's too gross... She should be fired for having that affliction*

So she sued [my wife]'s dad for discriminating against her disease/disability.

*Wow. That sux.*

It was many years ago and she settled for nothing. Like that asshole who took home $25K after he sued me for $1.1 million. [At 17, I was in a car accident where I got 46 stitches in my head but my friend was unconscious for about twenty minutes.]






*Yeah, that prick. Well, he got his, he's a loser. This chick is looking for a big, fat severance, but ain't getting it.*

Too true, I heard he was a teacher, married to a teacher, somewhere in lower-middle-class Long Island.

*So, short term gain, long term be a loser. Sounds like bliss... Not.* [This sounds like bliss... not! – Borat]

I found [my high school girlfriend]. She's married and lives in my wife's home town. She's now an IP attorney.

*Wow. That's cool*

9:05 PM

*She was the Dix Hills one you banged a few times? Curly hair, right? Google is just amazing, this hybrid satellite/ illustrated map is sick.*

Google Earth?

Yes, yes, yes, yes, to all.

*It's unreal cool.*

*Photoblogging using Google maps www.geologizes.com.*

*And a recall on dog condoms... www.dogcondoms.com/ product-recall.html.*

How weird that you mention it.

*Thx.*

[our friend] Natasha and I want to start a company for purebred dogs who are accidentally impregnated by mutts. We could help dog owners and we would like to call it www.dogabortions.com.

*Hahahaha. I'll invest. Morning after pill for dogs?*

No, our equipment would be one boxing glove for the "doctor" and heavy gardening gloves to hold the dog down for the "assistant."

I don't get that geologizes site.

*It's people's pics, mapped to where they were taken on Google maps, that's all.*

I don't get the interface I mean... What are you supposed to do with it?

I just looked at the recall site and they have meat-scented Dog Condoms®.

*For dog oral sex?*

I don't know, do you really want to confuse a dog into thinking that your penis is something edible? That seems like a very bad idea.

*True... sort of backwards logic.*

The issue seems to be a) they don't work to prevent pregnancy and b) people/dogs are choking on them.

*Maybe the sickies who blow dogs wrote in and asked for non-flavored?*

It almost seems like the condoms are being used incorrectly by the owner, but why would you put a condom on a dog in the first place?

*Man, they neuter for free in shelters!*

That's what I think, that people want dogs to fuck them using *these* condoms, which is fine. [In retrospect, it's not "fine" for people to have their dogs fuck them, condom or not.]

*Maybe they don't want a dog disease from fucking a dog.*

Sure, that makes good sense.

*Why fuck a dog if you risk disease?*

Maybe you really like the dog, the dog really likes you, and no human is interested in having sex with you.

*Maybe it's for all that bestiality porn I keep getting e-mails about.*

I just can't see how this is a business.

Well, the thing is, the guy is probably trying to create his own market and maybe he overestimated the size of the market.

*Size being a pun?*

No, I don't do puns.

*Spay!*

I mean, I always thought that birth control for dogs was just locking them inside or getting a tall fence.

*Maybe they want to breed them, just not all the time.*

I have to notify other investors so I'm sending my wife the following IM:

"This is important news for all investors in dogabortions.com. Please make note of this important safety recall and be careful with Dog Condoms®.

www.dogcondoms.com/ product-recall.html

Josh

Dog owners need to know this!"

*I know, that's exactly what I was saying! It's very important news.*

Then, a minute later, this IM from my wife:

"Thanks honey, the attorneys [that I am having an important meeting with, using my computer] enjoyed that on screen." [/sarcasm]

I got spam from someone named Ollie Floto.

*What a weird name. I should get you one of those spam name programs... Make your own.*

I hate spammers.

I wish them all dead.

But I do need VIAGKRA.

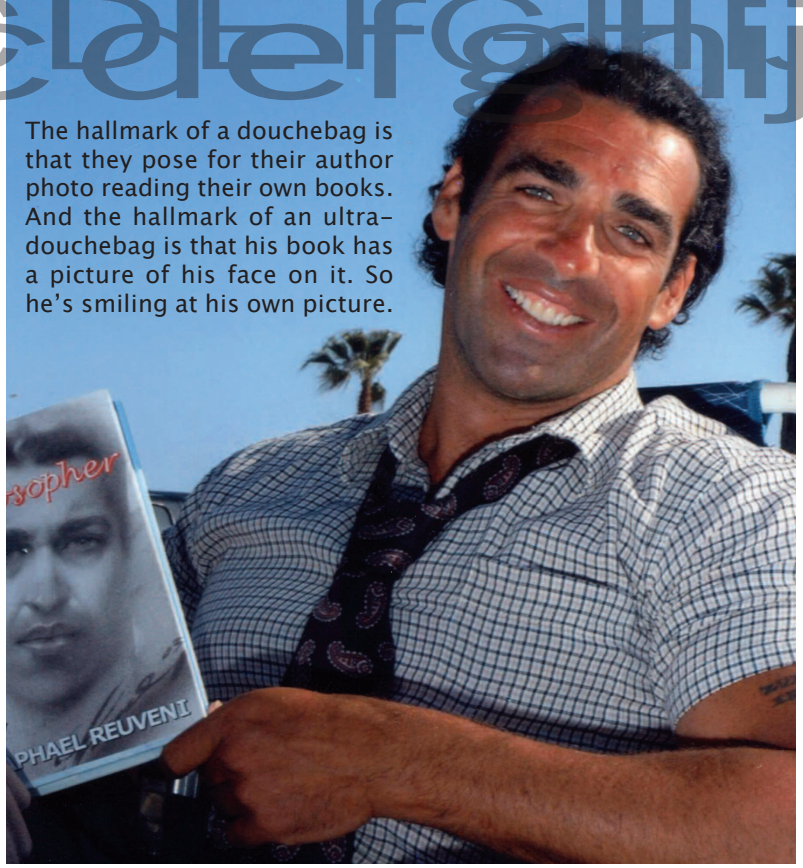
*Here's one...*

*They keep promoting "soft Cialis." As a means to get you hard? Isn't that the stupidest marketing in history?*

*A "soft" pill to get you wood? Durrr.*

They are not the brightest people in the world, but neither is their target market.

*Touché.*




The hallmark of a douchebag is that they pose for their author photo reading their own books. And the hallmark of an ultra-douchebag is that his book has a picture of his face on it. So he's smiling at his own picture.

One of my favorite things about doing a zine is all the interesting mail that I receive, whether it's offers of pornography addressed to Lurky, tear-stained panties from Japanese girls who are crushing on me, or the severed rats' heads that someone keeps mailing me, it's nice to know that my stalkers can mail a package, or address one. I try to respond to every letter that I get, even the creepy ones from prison. Since I started the zine I have tried my best to avoid direct contact with prisoners, not because I am prejudiced against them but because I have a natural fear of convicts. I don't want to go to jail, I don't want my name or words circulating around in jail and I most definitely don't want any ex-cons looking me up when they get out.

Occasionally I get a letter or e-mail that I find so interesting that I feel compelled to not only respond to it, but to share it with my readers. I wish that I was creative enough to fake a good letter, but truthiness is my ethos and I must serve that master well.



I received a strange package in my PO Box along with a DVD from a man named Raphael. He had used a Priority Mail envelope, but then covered it with duct tape so he wouldn't have to pay the Priority Mail postage, so clearly, he can think when he needs to. I scanned his letter with the intent of publishing it, but I think it's better if I transcribe to save space so I can publish more letters. I will put the original scans online, but for the print version, space is at a premium. So, here's his letter, with my explanation and theories following.

*Dear Josh Saitz*

*How are you? Hope well!*

*My name is Raphael "the philosopher." Enclosed is a D.V.D. for you to see with anyone you trust. My dream is for George Coony* [sic] *to see it directly. I am appealing to your Good nature to deliver the D.V.D. after detecting the light in it to Trey Parker —> thus to be delivered directly to George.*

*My message to the world of man* [WTF?] *is very important. In a nutshell, it is the blueprint to be Free through self-sufficiency! See for yourself! I must trimpth* [Maybe he means "triumph"? I have no idea, sorry] *& I trust you to not mock me even though we don't know each other and that I am appealing to you in that way.* [If he knew me at all, he should know he would be in for a sound mocking, but at the end, he said he is "appealing to me" and while he is a handsome man, I am the opposite of strictly dickly. So, I am not sure if he is hitting on me, or trying to appeal to my fictional "good nature," but in either case, good luck with that, thanks anyway.]

*This path is called the "soul-bearing path." The purest form of association amongst men* [except bareback anal, I presume] *George Cloony* [sic in a different way] *must know that I exist, and he could and would if your heart allows you to pass the message to Trey, thus the following.*

*God Bless You and I hope You do right by me.*

*Raphael* [phone number redacted]

*P.S. Allow me to leave you with proverb 3:27 - Revelation "Do not withhold good from those who deserve it; when it is in your power to act."*

If you are confused about all of the connections he is making, let me try to clarify, if I can. I do not know George Clooney, nor do I know Trey Parker, co-creator of *South Park*. The only connection I can draw between everyone in his letter is: a) I mentioned Trey Parker in a trivia quiz in a previous issue and published a picture of him in the answers; b) it is a well-known Hollywood story that Trey Parker and Matt Stone were commissioned to do a Christmas card "video" by a studio guy, that video was circulated all over and George Clooney was such a fan that he agreed to be the voice of Stan's gay dog in an episode of *South Park*. I think maybe Raphael thinks that if he thinks positive and believes it enough, his will can be done. I think he hopes that I'll be the right hand of "the philosopher" and watch his DVD, see light in it, pass it to Trey, who will then pass it to George, who will then... I haven't worked that part out yet.

Maybe Raphael thinks George Clooney will be so moved by his story that he'll hire him as a spiritual adviser, make his life story into a movie and then they can get married? I really don't know. I wrote back to him saying that I have no way to help him, I don't know George or Trey and that mocking people is pretty much all I do in this zine. I said I was sorry I couldn't help but I did watch a few minutes of his DVD. He's clearly insane. Maybe I'll post clips.

---

And now, for the ultimate callback:

*From:* [redacted]*@yahoo.com*
*Subject: www.donswayze.com*
*Date: December 11, 2008 1:41:19 AM*
*To: josh@negcap.com*

*You the one with the nasty website for Don Swayze?*

---

I got this e-mail and my heart stopped for just a second. Was this actually an e-mail from the great Don Swayze himself? Did he finally just put his own name into a browser? Or was Don just trying to buy it himself and was shocked to find that not only was donswayze.com taken, but it was a site by me that mocked him. On the site that I made, I said that comedian Mario Cantone was my Don Swayze, with pictures of us both in the same pose. When I got the e-mail I didn't know what to do with it, but I did forward it to everyone I've ever mentioned Don to and then thought about how best to respond.

*From:* [Don Swayze]*@yahoo.com*
*Subject:* *ok.....*
*Date:* *December 11, 2008 2:19:08 PM*
*To:* *josh@negcap.com*

*.....let's try this again.*

*You ARE the one who is behind the www.donswayze.com site!*
*I am all for having fun, but I wonder why you pick on me?!*
*I am partially responsible for my typecasting (trying to change that)... but playing characters and villains and "hillbillys" is not bad work for an actor (with a face like mine, lol).*
*It seems you would try to hurt my career, based on my appearance... and that kinda hurts, my friend.*

*HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO YOU,*
*Don Swayze*

*P.S. Just to make fun of myself... YOU are the Don Swayze to Mario Cantone, lol (one if the reasons your site doesn't work). At first I thought you made a typo and got the names backwards (maybe you were being ironic).*

———

Don-

If you really think that I am the Don to Mario Cantone, I have to respectfully disagree, he is much older and gayer than I am.

To tell you the truth, just the fact that you sent me a nice letter yourself, not a mean, threatening letter from your manager or something, means that you have a sense of humor. The site came about because it was an inside joke with me and my wife, and then a few of my co-workers. One day we ran into our boss's Patrick and it was so funny that we talked about it for hours. When my friend said that I should put a site together and he would host it for free, I thought it would be a really funny thing to do. Originally it was more of a tribute site to you because, and this is the point, it's about being overshadowed in life. In some ways in life, we are all overshadowed. I work in IT as a computer guy and my older brother has been at Google for years, so again, I am also poking fun at myself because everyone has been overshadowed.

It turned into more of a joke about how there are many celebrities who always have the not-quite-as-famous sibling, like Clint Howard. And then I threw anything into the site that I thought was funny just to make my co-workers laugh. It's our inside joke and I meant no offense by it. I could have gone with Jim Hanks or so many others, but you know that Swayze is just a really cool name and that people all over the world instantly recognize it. You just have a cool name and I really was not trying to pick on you, I was just trying to make my friends and myself laugh, and not even at your expense, more at the whole situation of being pretty good at something that your brother or sister or mother is, like, the best in the world at. It's about that struggle to overcome, and you have. Look at all your credits, it's amazing. I have a great deal of respect for your acting and I can honestly say that you were one of the best things about a great show, *Carnivàle*. And you should have heard me scream when you did the *X-Files*, I was like, OMG that's DON FUCKING SWAYZE on the *X-Files*!!

I really can't believe that you wrote to me, it's really very funny. You seem like a cool guy and I wish you the best of luck with your career. In fact, if you were interested, I publish a zine that you seem to have also found. I am working on my next issue and I bet I could think of some good questions to ask you via e-mail if you are up for an interview. Then maybe you could get me a high-quality head shot instead of making me use crappy little Internet pictures. I am sure you have something good. In a way, I am trying to make you more famous.

Anyway, I didn't mean to pick on you, I really do think you are a good actor and your site is much better than mine. I also just checked and there are two Facebook groups dedicated to you, and I think only one of them is trying to be ironic. I joined them both today.

Also, your e-mail says Donny, do you go by Donny? And then just professionally as Don?

You have a happy holiday, too.

Jøsh

———

After that, I kept dreaming that I would hear back from him, he would get the joke and that I could actually do a serious interview with him about his life and career in the shadow of Patrick. Around the time Don e-mailed, Patrick admitted that he had pancreatic cancer but was still smoking cigarettes and shooting a show for A&E called *The Beast.* After a few months, it was reported that Patrick Swayze was nearly dead of the same disease that killed Bill Hicks in 1994. I wanted to do a formal interview with Don and ask him questions about his life, but he didn't reply. I sent him one final message, hoping it might prompt him to respond, but he didn't.



Hey Donny-

I thought you would have replied to my message, maybe you didn't get it? Anyway, I wanted to just wish you and your family a happy holiday and I hope you don't take it personally, I was just having some fun and I poke fun at everyone, including myself.

Jøsh

In a shocking twist to end the story, a woman named Meagan wrote me a letter in 2010 that said that she worked as a production assistant on a movie with Don. Over the course of the few months that they worked together, she became friends with him. She told me he was hurt by my web site but too shy to do anything about it. She offered me $1,000 for the .com and she said she planned to give it to Don as a birthday present but, instead, I said I would give it to him for free as a sign that I have no malice at all. I asked her if she could arrange a real interview with me and Don and she is working on it. We almost did it once but I think I can still make it happen. By the time this zine comes out, I hope to be knee deep in a new project with Meagan that I am calling "The Redemption of Don Swayze." Look for it because it's going to be as good as Don!

Who is the Don now, truly?

Even in the letters section, Don Swayze is overshadowed, this time by Raphael "The Prophet"

# NEGABILITY

## Credit where credit is due

(Mad Props, Big Ups, Yo Yo Yo, Top of the Food Chain)

I'd like to recommend the following things because they are near and dear to me and I want to help those who matter most. Thanks to: Robyn Hitchcock and Bill Hicks, for making noble failure cool. Musical soundtrack provided by: Beck, Underworld, The Wombats, Girl Talk, Soulwax/2 Many DJs, Flight of the Conchords, Hall & Oates, Howard Stern, Stephen Lynch, Louis CK, Too Much Joy, Phoenix and Mark Ronson.

I also have to thank some people who gave me support throughout the production of this issue, beginning with my beautiful wife. My kids had little to do with it, except insofar as their birth has allowed me to leave my job and given me time to work on the zine. Superstar Garett Holden did many gorgeous illustrations as well as the covers. If this zine were ever to hire anyone, he would be the only one. I would also overpay and underwork him because I bet it would produce incredible results. I can't thank G enough, so I gave him the back cover and I encourage you to join his Facebook group called Beyond the White Wall. I also have to thank everyone who pledged on Kickstarter.com. They made the printing of this zine possible. Without them, this would not be on paper.

My friend Kurt Marquart did the illustration for "Beating the Horse That Has Already Died," as a favor to me. He rocks. Superpal Katie Kretschmer is my favorite proofreader because she corrects without being critical and my cousin David S. Wallens also gave me a very late proofread. Peter Lopez gives me hope for humanity because he is a good person and he deserves to be happy. I have to thank him for being a friend that I can always count on, even for tech support. My in-laws, Tom and Leslie, were insanely generous in their financial and emotional support. I would like to thank everyone who has ever sent me a nice letter or e-mail including longtime penpals like Emersøn Damerøn, Meagan Bernabe (who will publish me in *Geek Out* and is hooking me up with Don Swayze!), Nikki Coles, Conan Neutron and the great Clint Johns, who I have always considered the first fan of *Negative Capability*. It was his idea to carry *NegCap* in Tower Records (RIP) in 1998 and that single decision had such a huge impact on my confidence (and distribution) that I feel like thanking him until my tongue is swollen.

## My butt plugs

Sometimes I think there are only three zines left, Eric Lyden's *Fish with Legs* ($2 to 224 Moraine St., Brockton, MA, 02301), *The Inner Swine* by Jeff Somers ($2 to PO Box 3024, Hoboken, NJ 07030 will get you at least an issue, but be glad if you get anything) and the various zines of R. Lee (rleemail@gmail.com). I also wrote a great short story for a new zine called *Geek Out* about playing Grand Theft Auto and many cool pieces all about visiting NYC for the *Zinester's Guide to NYC* book. I dedicate this zine to anyone who still does a zine because it's a sad waste of time. As Alfred exhorts Bruce Wayne in *The Dark Knight*, we endure. We take on the challenges that no one else is willing to face, like stealing copies from work.

The best public-access TV show in NYC history is now available as a limited-edition boxed-set of DVDs that includes all 18 episodes, plus shorts. Fifteen years in the making and remastered on a three DVD set, there is more than nine hours of sex, violence, humor and art, all mashed up at a hyper speed. There has never been a show like it and the whole set can be yours by sending a check or M.O. for just $50 (free shipping) to Ron Rocheleau, 189 Allen Street #9B, New York, NY 10002. Check out free samples online at concretetv.com and YouTube.

## Final thoughts

I like blowjobs, pizza and sleep, in that order. Work sucks ass. If you like this, check out the web site, become a fan on Twitter and Facebook (facebook.com/negcap), buy other stuff and tell your friends, lovers and slaves. It's all a big joke: this zine, life, all of it.

If it were possible to kill remotely, without repercussions, many of you would already be dead. Semen is like snot, if you don't blow it out every few days, you can't breathe. I like to think of myself as a Renaissance Dilettante.


Are you poor? Were you ever kicked out of school for being a bully? Are you sick and tired of foreigners who speak their own dirty languages? Do you ever get an erection when killing an animal? Do you think reading is a waste of time? Does a flag make you proud and a turban make you angry? If you answered Hell, yes! to any of these questions—The Great American Killing Machine needs you to: cook, exercise in the mud, sleep in crowded, smelly bunks, take verbal abuse from people with fewer chromosomes than you and kill more babies before 9AM than most cops kill all day! If you are man enough, go down to your local recruiting center and sign up, but make sure that you're dumb, self-loathing and have no possible future. At least if we kill you by accident, we'll give you a free funeral and a free flag for your family, as a keepsake, something no other employer could ever offer you! Sign up today!

WWW.GOARMY.COM


## Never coming in Negative Capability

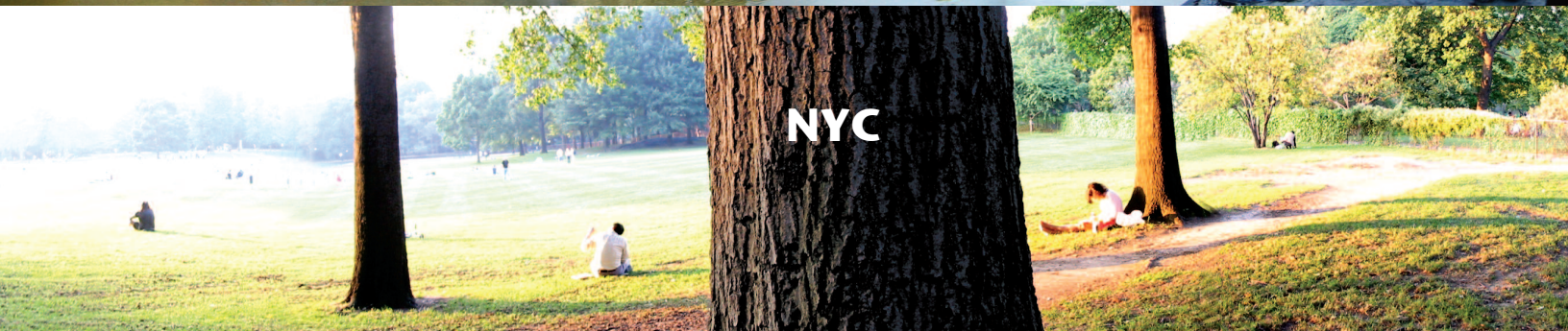

I Love Meat Slurry
Training A Come Butler
Things I've Stolen from My Employer
My Meth Lab: A Photo Essay
I Am Losing My Hair and I Can't Get It Up
Christ is My Personal Savior
Crimes I've Committed But Never Been Caught
Stealing Mail is Fun
My Loving Family
Smegma is Just the Appetizer
Don't You Hate When People Ask and Answer Their Own Pointless and Inane Questions? I Sure Do!
Deepthroating a Vending Machine Slim Jim at a NJ Truck Stop in Exchange for Blowjobs on Demand (Pictorial)
Friendly Monsters: Are they monsters who are friendly or friendly people who are secretly monsters?
W.: Great President or The Greatest President?
My Gay Experiences
The Compromises I Make to Get By
Your Kid is Much Cuter Than Mine
Rehab Worked for Me and I Am Clean
I Met A Great Guy in Jail
How to Smuggle Illegal Drugs

MIAMI

venice

AMSTERDAM

FLORENCE


NYC

WWW.GARETTHOLDEN.COM

# GARETT HOLDEN

## PHOTOGRAPHY & DESIGN

DESIGN PHOTOGRAPHY FILM ART

# Closing Credits

While I often say that this zine is a one man show, nothing this massive can be done alone in a vacuum. I do write every word, design every page and all that kind of stuff but I also have some help from some friends. My wife is always very inspiring and I love her dearly. I dedicate every issue to her because I think without her there would be no good stuff to talk about, it would be all bile, all the time, and that's no fun. She's kind, sweet, patient, smart and she knows how to keep me from going nuts. So, thanks, boss. My friend Garett Holden has done a lot of work on the zine, including taking the picture for the cover of #4, doing the illustration for the cover of #5 as well as many little illustrations as needed, including the image above, which was used a background in "Karoshi: Book Two." He's also a tremendously talented guy and I am glad he's my friend. My best friend Peter Lopez has always been supportive, he helped me record the audiozine that I did (Misfit Toys) and has been a promoter of this zine wherever he goes. He also has filmed most of my readings and we both help each other with computer issues as needed. My wife's friend Natasha has written a couple of Mini-Rants™ and she's also been a fan since the very beginning. My friend Katie has been my loyal proofreader forever and is one of my oldest friends. She has taken a lot of time out of her very busy life to read every single word in the zine multiple times, always using her red pen to help create magic, not stifle creativity. I don't usually like editors but I love Katie and I think she's so smart and talented that she's one of the few people that I trust with my words. She's just awesome. I wish I had something to plug for her, but I don't.

This issue was written in Scrivener and designed using QuarkXPress 8.5 on a Quad 2.66 Mac Pro. Brought to you by absolutely no one but me and my backers. I took ads for one issue, got burned and decided that I'd rather not make the design ugly by inserting commercial messages. I also don't want to compromise my vision or get "notes" from anyone about what I should be doing.

Inspired by Bill Hicks and Robyn Hitchcock, influenced by Howard Stern, Matt Groening, Bob Black, Alan Moore, Neil Gaiman, Jonathan Ames, Will Self, the Zodiac Killer and you, my beautiful princess. There are many other zines that *Negative Capability* has been compared to, but almost all of them are now long gone. Some are probably better left dead, zines were the first casualty of the digital age, but not mine.

In terms of inspiration, I think *Negative Capability* was heavily influenced during its inchoate period by John Kelly's *XYY*. As I discovered zines, I found others that inspired me and fueled my creativity, including *POPsmear*, *Murder Can Be Fun*, *Rumpus Room*, *Retard* and *Adbusters*. I also have found kindred spirits in the makers of *Fish With Legs*, the *Inner Swine* and *Barrelhouse*. I always enjoyed the pop culture stuff in *Hitch*, the angry essays in *ANSWER Me!* and a few others that I can't remember off the top of my head. I also wanted to say that Marc Parker of *Azmacort* zine is a fucking douchebag assmonkey so that whenever someone Googles him, they find this. There may be other Marc Parkers out there, but this one is an asshole who should only drown in monkey come. While I am at it, Dan Halligan is a fucking retard douchebag assface cuntwaffle, Dan Taylor is a douchenozzle fart knocker and there was one other douche who did a zine called the West Virgina Surf Report that I absolutely despise, but I can't even remember that asshole's name. I guess that's a good thing. Oh, wait, his name is Jeff Kay, and I FUCKING HATE HIS GUTS.

I also think it's important to mention that in terms of career aspirations, I've always aimed to have a small but loyal cult. I don't give a shit about mainstream success, making money or having my work reprinted or adapted. In that sense, I am like my own personal heroes, Robyn Hitchcock, Bill Hicks and Alan Moore, though Moore gets crankier the more successful he is. You can also throw in some others like Dave Attell, Jon Stewart, Trey Parker and Matt Stone and any number of Jewish comedians, especially the genius Don Rickles. In Yiddish there is a word for what I am: a tummler, which is someone who likes to stir shit up. I come from a long line of tummlers and my son is going to continue that tradition.

# Thank you, Thank you

I have to thank all of my backers from Kickstarter.com, they made the printing possible. These are published chronologically in order of donation, not by amount.

John Bligh - A friend of mine from college that I didn't meet until 20 years after graduating.

Andrea Lipomi - One of my oldest zine friends, she did a zine, ran a distro, was politically actively and I think I may meet her for the first time in Las Vegas in 2011.

Ron Rocheleau - The man responsible for my favorite public access show, Concrete TV. He also introduced me to Garett Holden, who did the covers and lots of other art.

JMHS - My wife secretly kicked in $100 and didn't tell me. When I called her to tell her, she was like, "Who do you think that is?"

J. Thomas Hunsucker - My father-in-law threw in $500 just to blow my mind. Consider my mind blown.

Marta S. - My mom.

Jeffrey Daniel Xavier Somers - Publisher of the Inner Swine. He has sent me so many free issues of his zine that he was due a free copy anyway, but he donated and didn't even request the free copy.

Graeme Williams - I don't know Graeme personally, but he seems to be a longstanding fan of the zine.

Shans - My uncle Jon, who has turned out to be a big fan.

Conan Neutron - Lead singer and songwriter for Victory & Associates, Replicator and probably a dozen other bands. He's a good writer, too.

David S. Wallens - One of only three first cousins that I have. He also gave me a late proofread, which I totally appreciated.

Daniella Jaeger - She works for Kickstarter and just liked my video. She also got my project promoted on Kickstarter, which I think really helped me to reach my goal. She tried to get me named project of the day but it wasn't meant to be. I still think she's super cool, even though she's only gave $1, I want her to feel like she got BEYOND her money's worth, for just $1. Kickstarter WORKS!

Deflagrati0n - A stranger who seems to like my video.

Johnnie Utah - I think this is a pseudonym for a girl but I don't know him/her. THANKS!

Nikki Coles - The coolest chick in all of the UK.

Brian Ong - One of my wife's friends from work, I don't want to say boss, but they work together and are very similar.

Katie Kretschmer - My proofreader, former co-worker (from 95-97) and one of my oldest friends. I love Katie. I usually call her Kaptain Kellie Krunchbar, but this is her real name.

Kelly O'Shaughnessy - A friend of my sister's who is a lot like my sister, just a super cool, positive, kind person.

Nathan Fan - One of my wife's closest friends from work, even though they no longer work together. He's the same kind of weird as my wife and he pledged some odd amount just for fun.

Curbside Splendor Publishing - My friend Victor's publishing venture. He is also going to be publishing a short story of mine called "Terminal Velocity." That story also appears in this issue.

Bill Hirsch - My grandmother's first cousin who is in his 80's. He doesn't understand the zine at all, he just thinks I am acting out to get attention, but he supports me anyway. He's a great guy and I am glad he is in my family. Or I am in his.

Margaret Williams - I feel like I should know her but I don't.

Wasabi Distro - One of my favorite penpals who lives in Japan, Andrea Hope. She entered a trivia contest in one of my early zines and we've been friends ever since.

Natasha Aronberg - My wife's best friend, a guest contributor to #3 and #5 with some great Mini-Rants and a wonderful friend and mom. Tash has contributed a lot of attitude and she's very funny.

Roland Besserer - A stranger who will be a friend one day.

Kara Krupnick - One of my sister's close friends from high school. She was always very nice to me and hopefully one day I'll see her again in the meatspace.

Rob Senzon - My former co-worker who taught me useful computer stuff and to appreciate the depth of feeling in Kenny Rogers.

Mariem - My friend George's wife. We went to school together but I don't think I ever met her. I didn't even realize it was her when she backed me, I thought she was a French woman but it's Marie M., not Mariem.

Jessica Frost - Another person I went to college with who I don't know personally but who I like anyway.

Kevin Bunce - Kevin is my biological great-grandson.

Jonathan Glover - I think Jonathan and Charles are both guys from Purchase that got hit with a fundraising spam and decided to support me.

Charles Alexander Zorn - I think we went to Purchase, which might be the only thing we have in common so far.

Adrienne Biddle - An ex-girlfriend that I was very mean to in real life. I even wrote a mean piece about her in #4. Then I wrote a mean follow-up for #5. Then I realized I was being a dick about it and I took out the mean stuff and replaced it with nice stuff.

Robert Moskal - Stranger danger!

Michelle Van Demark - Another ex that I stay in touch with via Words with Friends, my favorite app. She paid me the highest compliment when she said it makes her so happy to beat me.

John Hewitt - He's a friend from my stay-at-home dads group. He has a little boy named Rhys who is so darn cute. I always liked him but I thought he didn't like me. He didn't return calls or e-mails for a while so I just gave up. Then I spammed him to raise money for the zine, he pledged $50 (IIRC) and said he didn't want anything. I sent him an e-mail to thank him and got no reply. I guess it's me.

Jeremy Shatan - A new fan.

Emerson Dameron - A very old fan. I remember Em wrote to me from college in Athens, GA. He liked my zine and my audio zine and sent me a nice fan letter. He told me he was playing some tracks from my CD on his radio show and I thought that was the coolest thing ever. He even recorded his show a few times and sent it to me, and I am telling you, hearing your own work on the radio is pretty fucking cool.

Catherine Spencer - Another very old friend and broker who found & sold a few apartments for us. I love Catherine to pieces.

Peter Lopez - My best friend in the whole wide world. Truly, my BFF. He's like me, only not, and much nicer.

Jennifer Saitz - My sister.

Brad Chanin - I don't know Brad, but I would like to.

Mor Mor (trust) - My grandmother threw in $100 from Heaven.

Ken Miller - He used to do a zine I liked called Shouting at the Postman. We also play a lot of Words with Friends and we are pretty evenly matched.

Deborah - My friend from work. She was always there for me when I needed someone and I was always there for her when things got hairy at work. Even though we have only gotten together a few times, I feel like we are very close.

Brian Miller - My old college suite-mate. He is still one of the coolest guys in the world. He runs the photography dept. at Dartmouth, grows his own vegetables, has a beard like a mountain man and drives a big old truck. He's one of the most original characters ever.

Kurt Marquart - Another cool guy from college that I didn't know then but I do know now. He was kind enough to do the artwork for "Beating the Horse That Has Already Died." Every time I see that picture, I laugh. My kids always ask me why I am punching the dead horse and I say because he was in league with Nazis.

Sara Hunsucker - My sister-in-law who is a talented artist in her own right and is opening a cool art studio for kids in Pasadena.

Gevin Shaw - A fan from way back who only knows me through reading the zine. He lives in San Francisco and usually gets his copy at Naked Eye on Haight Street.

William Wong - Peter's brother-in-law and a very cool and funny guy. William Wong is not his real name at all, but the story is so long and convoluted that it's easier to just call him William.

Dan Wearsch - A stranger who I hope will sleep with my wife.

Phil Horton - I met Phil at Gymboree when my son Oliver was just a baby and his son Dylan was just a baby. We were the only dudes there so we hung out together.

nabranch - I don't know this person at all. Thanks for your support, stranger!

Matthew Lewis - The name rings a bell, but I think it's because I have a cousin named Matthew and my father's name was Lewis.

Jen Cole Neville - A friend from college that I thought I had a one-night-stand with, but it turns out, that was a different girl.

Kevin W. Fitzgerald - Another friend from Purchase who is very cool and even came to two of my readings in support.

Yvette Mangual - Yvette is a friend of a friend who thinks I am funny.

David Carroll (aka Davo) - is the coolest guy from my college. The only white guy I know who could pull off waxed braids for most of college. He's also a very interesting and talented artist. I hope to see him again someday, too

Eric Deuce - I don't know Eric, but he's got a huge penis.

Ross - He didn't even leave a last name. Maybe he doesn't want me to know who he is?

Meagan Bernabe - She is the Kevin Bacon between me and Don Swayze, a very cool chick and she will be publishing a story of mine in her new zine called Geek Out. I hope to meet her sooner rather than later.

Saara Bloomberg - My favorite South African lesbian from college. She is like a dude, only disgusting and horny and perverted. She is my best friend on Facebook and I even created a fan page for her period. I am spelling her name the way she pronounces it and also so no one will find this listing if they google her.

Chris Payne - Another cool friend from Purchase who I know through Brian Miller. I am always so grateful that anyone gives, so thanks, Chris!

J Thomas Hunsucker - This is my father-in-law again, at the very end of fundraising pushing me over $3,000. Thanks Gramps! He blamed it on OCD. I blame it on love.